The CURLYTOPS at SUNSET BEACH

HOWARD R. GARIS

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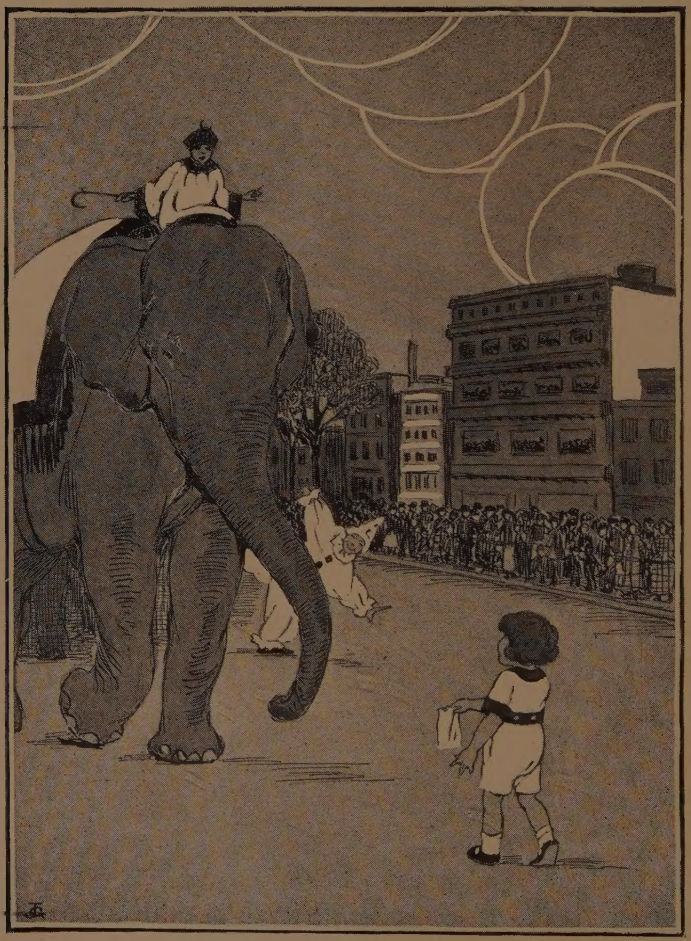

BUT TROUBLE WAS NOT AFRAID. THERE HE STOOD, HOLDING OUT HIS BAG OF PEANUTS.

THE CURLYTOPS AT SUNSET BEACH

OR

What Was Found in the Sand

BY

HOWARD R. GARIS

AUTHOR OF "THE CURLYTOPS AT CHERRY FARM," "THE CURLYTOPS AND THEIR PETS," "THE CURLYTOPS IN THE WOODS," "UNCLE WIGGILY STORIES," ETC.

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NEW YORK
CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY

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By HOWARD R. GARIS

12mo. Cloth. Illustrated.

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THE CURLYTOPS AT SUNSET BEACH
Oh, What Was Found in the Sand

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, New York

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THE CURLYTOPS AT SUNSET BEACH

Printed in U. S. A.

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THE CURLYTOPS AT SUNSET BEACH

CHAPTER I

THE CIRCUS PARADE

"When will it be time to go, Mother?" asked Janet Martin, as she swung to and fro on the front gate.

"Pretty soon," was the answer from Mrs. Martin, who was sitting on the shady porch.

"How long is pretty soon?" Ted Martin wanted to know. He was throwing stones at the fence, trying to send them through a knot hole. And it wasn't easy, he found. Though he had tossed many pebbles, not one had Ted sent through the hole.

"Pretty soon isn't very long," replied Mrs. Martin, with a smile. "As soon as Daddy comes we shall start."

"I'm going out in the street to see if he's coming," announced Janet, bouncing down from the gate.

"No, dear! I'd rather you wouldn't," called Mrs. Martin. "There are so many autos in the street now, going to the circus parade, you might get hurt. Stay here, Jan!"

"Oh, I'll not go into the street!" answered the little girl. "I'll just go on the sidewalk so I can look down and see if Daddy is coming! I'll be careful!"

"I'll go with her," offered Teddy, who was a year older than his sister. "I'll take care of her," he added, looking toward his mother.

"That's a good boy, Ted," she told him.

But Janet did not seem much impressed.

"Pooh!" she exclaimed. "*You* don't need to take care of me, Teddy Martin! I can take care of myself!"

"Oh, Janet! That wasn't kind, when Teddy offered to watch you," chided her mother. "You shouldn't have said that."

"Well, Teddy can look after himself," said Janet, with a little shake of her head which sent her ringlets of hair flying into and out of her eyes. "And I'll look after myself," she added. "Course, I didn't want to be impolite," she continued. "But——"

"I'm older'n you are, and I have a right

to watch out so you don't get hit by an auto!" declared Teddy.

"Pooh! You can't even watch out for yourself!" giggled Janet. "You fell into the brook last week; that's what you did!"

"Well, my foot slipped," explained Teddy. "And if I hadn't fallen in first you would, 'cause you were walking along the same path. Only when you saw me go in, you jumped back."

"Oh, all right! I don't care!" and Janet gave herself a little fling as she went out of the gate. "I'm going to look for Daddy. You can come if you want to," she added to her brother.

"Huh! She thinks she's smart," mumbled Teddy, as he ran his hand through the mass of tangled, golden curls on his head, to get some of them out of his eyes so he could see better.

Janet and Teddy each had beautiful curly hair, and that is how they came to be given the name of "Curlytops," by which they were called more often than by their real names.

"Now, children, be pleasant and kind to each other," begged Mrs. Martin, as the two went out on the sidewalk. "This is a holi-

day, and you don't want to spoil it by being cross."

However, the little quarrels, or "spats," between Ted and Janet never lasted very long, and they were soon on good terms again, looking down the street for a sight of their father. They saw many persons walking past, and there was a large number of automobiles in the street—in fact, the streets of Cresco, an Eastern town where the Martin family lived, were unusually crowded on this day.

While Ted and Janet were eagerly looking for a sight of their father, a little boy, several years younger than the Curlytops, came out of the house. He did not have their clustering ringlets, though he was a fine-looking little chap.

"Here's Baby William, Mrs. Martin," announced Norah Jones, who was both cook and nursemaid in the household. "I've got him nice and clean again, and I hope he stays so!"

"I join with you in that hope, Norah," laughed Mrs. Martin. "But I'm afraid it will not last very long."

"Oh, well, sure, he's a dear little chap; aren't you?" And Norah gave the youngest

member of the Martin family a kiss before she led him over to his mother.

"I'm goin' to see a nellifunt, I am!" announced William.

"Are you, William?" asked his mother.

"An' I'm goin' to feed peanuts to a nellifunt, I am!" went on the little fellow.

"Well, maybe, if Daddy will hold you up," replied Mrs. Martin. "But you must be very careful, Trouble, dear!"

"I'm not scairt of a nellifunt!" declared Trouble.

This nickname had been given to William because he was so often in trouble of one kind or another. Sometimes it was his fault and sometimes it wasn't. But "Trouble" he was called, and trouble he was very often in, though he generally managed to get out again. Or, if he didn't, Janet or Teddy would help him.

"Oh, here comes Daddy! Here comes Daddy!" cried Janet, jumping up and down on the sidewalk in front of the house. "I'm going to meet him!" she added.

"Don't go past the corner!" warned her mother, as the little girl darted off on a run.

"I won't let her," announced Teddy, rapidly following his sister.

"I want to go! I want to go! Wait for me! I want to see a nellifunt!" wailed William, from the porch, as he saw his brother and sister darting away.

"They aren't going to the circus parade now, Trouble, dear," said his mother, catching him just in time to keep him from rolling down the steps. "They'll come back for you."

Trouble, who had started to cry, thought better of it. His lower lip, which had begun to stick out, was drawn in, and there was only just one little tear in each eye. But these soon dried away and he smiled again.

He smiled more happily a little later when he saw, skipping toward the house, on either side of a jolly, pleasant-faced man, Ted and Janet. They had met their father at the corner and were escorting him back to the house.

"Hello, Curlytops!" Mr. Martin had greeted his boy and girl.

"Hello, Daddy!" they had answered.

And now, from the porch, William shouted:

"I'm goin' to see a nellifunt, I am! An' I'm goin' to feed a nellifunt peanuts!"

"Well, don't let the elephant step on you;

that's all I ask," laughed Mr. Martin, as he entered the gate. "Are you all ready?" he asked his wife. "I'm a bit late, but I couldn't get away from the store any sooner."

"The children have been a little impatient," replied Mrs. Martin. "But we are all ready to start now."

"Then come on," invited Mr. Martin to his family. "I thought we'd walk down, instead of going in the auto," he added. "There's so much traffic it's hard to drive, and there won't be any room to park, I think."

Then the Curlytops made ready to go downtown to view the circus parade. It was an annual affair in Cresco, and the schools always closed on that day—happy Cresco!

"Isn't Norah going?" asked Mr. Martin, for he wanted all in his household to share in whatever joy there was.

"Oh, yes. She and Patrick and Mary, the girl from next door, are all going together," said Mrs. Martin. "Norah has the rear door key so she can get in if she is back before we are."

"And I suppose she will be, if we have to stay as long as we usually do," chuckled

Daddy Martin, as he motioned toward the children. "We'll be lucky if we don't have to stay to see the procession twice," he went on in a low voice.

"Oh, I think, as long as you are going to take them to the circus this afternoon, they won't want to stay too long at the parade," murmured his wife. "They'll be anxious to get home to eat so they can hurry off to the big tent."

"Maybe so," assented her husband. "You never can tell, though. But let's get started," he added to the children.

Out of the front gate trooped the Curlytops, their father, mother and little brother —the whole family. The streets were becoming more and more crowded each minute, for the time for the start of the circus parade was drawing near.

As Mr. Martin had said, it was almost impossible to drive an auto, and those who had tried it were beginning to wish they hadn't. Many were so hemmed about by the crowd that they just had to wait for the traffic to pass by.

Taking a short cut through some back streets, Mr. Martin finally led his family out on one of the main highways of Cresco.

It was along here that the circus parade would pass, and already most of the best places were taken, along the curb, on the doorsteps of houses, in the upper windows of residences, and elsewhere.

Mr. Martin seemed to have some special place in view, for he hurried along, not trying to push into the crowd and gain a spot on the edge of the curb. At last he announced:

"Here we are!"

He swung in toward a house with a high stoop which was not as crowded as were all the other residences. A gentleman on the steps was keeping intruders away.

"Mr. Harrison has saved a place for us," said Mr. Martin. "We shall have a fine view of the parade."

"Oh, this is great!" cried Ted, as he saw the vantage point.

"Beautiful," agreed Janet.

"You are very kind, Mr. Harrison," said Mrs. Martin, as she took a chair which her husband's friend brought out. "This is seeing the parade in comfort."

"Having no children of my own, I like to see those of my friends made happy," said Mr. Harrison. "Here, William," he

added to the little boy, "you may stand on this stool, and then you can see over the heads of the crowd."

"It's nice," was Trouble's way of thanking Mr. Harrison. "But how am I goin' to feed a nellifunt peanuts away up here?" and he seemed quite worried about it.

"Save your peanuts until this afternoon, dear, and feed them to the elephant in the circus animal tent," advised his mother.

"But I want to feed peanuts to a nellifunt right *now*!" wailed Trouble, and it is hard to tell to what lengths he might have gone had not some voices cried:

"Here it comes! Here comes the parade! I see the camels! I see the elephants!"

That was enough for William. He ceased to cry out about his peanuts, and almost trembled with excitement as he stood on the stool Mr. Harrison had provided for him.

At last the circus procession was in sight —happy time!

There were troops of horsemen on their prancing steeds, gay in trappings of gold, silver, crimson and green. There were cowboys and cowgirls, riding their western ponies. Swinging their lassos and waving

their broad-brimmed hats, these riders of the plains kept up a constant yelling of:

"Hi! Yi! Yippi! Yi! Wow! Whoopee!"

"There's the nellifunts! There's the nellifunts!" cried Trouble, as the big beasts slowly shuffled past. "Oh, there's the nellifunts!"

There was a goodly number of elephants with this circus—more than usual, it seemed. For after the first herd had passed, Ted, looking down the street, announced:

"More elephants are coming!"

"And camels, too!" added Janet. "I see some with two humps!"

"Look at the man in the lions' cage!" shouted Teddy.

"I should think he'd be afraid," murmured Janet.

"Pooh, he's got 'em trained so they eat out of his hand," said her brother. "And he's got about two pistols in his pockets so he could shoot 'em if they bit him."

"S'posin' they bit him first—then he couldn't shoot," declared Janet.

"Yes he could," Teddy declared. "Oh, look!" he added. "He's making a lion do tricks!"

Just as the lions' cage came opposite the stoop where the Curlytops were perched, the man in the iron-barred wagon held up a hoop and one of the kingly beasts leaped through it.

Much excited, Teddy and Janet paid little attention to William, whom, up to this time, Janet had had her arm around so he would not topple off the stool. But as the lions' cage passed, and other, less showy, beasts succeeded, the little girl's attention went back to her brother. But William wasn't on his stool.

"Where's Trouble?" cried Janet.

"Don't tell me he has gone!" gasped her mother.

But it was so. Trouble was not on the porch.

"He must have gone down on the sidewalk," announced Mr. Martin. "I'll get him!" he added, just as the second herd of elephants came shuffling along.

Mr. Martin began to worm his way through the dense crowd. Suddenly a voice cried:

"Look out! Look out! That elephant's coming right this way! Oh, look out for the little boy! The elephant will step on him!"

There were screams from girls and women and shouts from the men. The crowd broke and scattered at one point. Mr. Martin had a glimpse of a big elephant, refusing to be guided by the man sitting on his huge head, swinging into the crowd. Then Mr. Martin saw baby William holding out a bag of peanuts to the big beast that, stretching out its trunk, seemed about to step on the little lad.

CHAPTER II

THE BIG SHOW

"WILLIAM! William!" shouted Mr. Martin to his small son. "Come back! Look out for the elephant!"

But what with the excited cries of those in the crowd, anxious to get out of the way of the animal, with the calls of the beast's driver, perched on the elephant's head, and with the noise of the steam calliope (which was coming along) it was impossible to make Trouble hear.

There he stood, almost by himself now, for the crowd had rushed away from him in fear of the elephant. But Trouble was not afraid. There he stood, holding out his bag of peanuts. In fact, it was this that had caused the elephant to get out of line with the others in the herd, and make a dash for the sidewalk. The huge beast either saw or smelled Trouble's peanuts.

The animal now seemed beyond the control of his driver, for though the man on the big head of the elephant shouted and jabbed him with the sharp ankus, or hook, the beast would not obey. On he swung toward Trouble, and Mr. Martin was not close enough to catch up his little son in time, it seemed, to prevent his being trampled on.

But just when it appeared that one of the immense feet would be set down on William, there darted out of the crowd an elderly gentleman with very white hair. He had been standing on the edge of the crowd, with an elderly, sweet-faced woman.

"Oh, Harry! Be careful!" cried this woman, as her husband made a dash for William.

"I'll be careful; but I must save that little boy!" the white-haired man said.

A moment later he had snatched Trouble up out of the path of the elephant, and there was a sigh of relief from the crowd. So quickly did the elderly gentleman grab up the little boy that Trouble's bag of peanuts was shaken from his hand and fell to the ground.

The elephant saw this, and, with a squeal of delight, picked the nuts up in his trunk,

and thrust them into his small mouth. For an elephant's mouth is very small, compared to so large a beast—nothing like as large as the mouth of a hippopotamus.

"Oh, William! William! why did you do that?" cried his father, as he reached the side of the elderly gentleman, who held the little fellow. "Why did you go down off the stoop?"

"'Cause I wanted to give peanuts to a nellifunt."

"Well, the elephant nearly gave you something you didn't want—a hard bump, my little man!" exclaimed the elderly gentleman. "You should be more careful."

"Indeed he should," declared Mr. Martin. "I am greatly obliged to you, my dear sir," he added. "You probably saved William's life."

"Oh, I guess it wouldn't have been as bad as that," said the white-haired rescuer, with a smile. "These circus elephants are generally very gentle and well trained. I never heard of an elephant stepping on a person unless in a rage, and this elephant doesn't seem mad. I think he was just anxious to get the little fellow's peanuts, and so rushed out of line."

That is how it had happened. And now, having gotten the treat, the big animal allowed his driver to guide him back into the parade line again.

The crowd, once the scare had passed, surged back toward the curb again, to view the remainder of the procession. The elderly gentleman just had time to pass Trouble into his father's arms when they were almost swept off their feet by the surge of the throng. Mr. Martin was anxious to get back to Mr. Harrison's house, from the vantage point of which his wife and the Curlytops had seen the rescue. But before he went he wanted to know the name of the old gentleman who had snatched Trouble from under the elephant's big feet.

"Won't you tell me where you live, so I may call and thank you more formally?" asked Mr. Martin, as he took a firmer hold of his little son.

"Oh, it wasn't much of anything—I mean on my part," said the white-haired man, as he made his way toward his sweet-faced wife. "I am——"

But just as he was telling his name there came another rush on the part of the crowd, and he was swept away from Mr. Martin

before the Curlytops' father could hear what was said.

"I can't see good down here! I want to see the nellifunts and the parade!" cried William, for the crowd was closing in around him and he could not peer over the heads of the people.

"Trouble, you were a bad little boy to go down there all by yourself," said his father, as he struggled to make a path through the throng to get back to the stoop. "You must never do it again."

"No, sir, I won't," the little fellow promised, and then he thought of nothing more except the parade, which again he could view as his father mounted the steps.

"Oh, what a fright I had!" murmured Mrs. Martin, as she took William from his father's arms and stood him on the stool once more. "Trouble, why did you do it?"

"I wanted to give peanuts to the nellifunt," was all he said, never turning his head, for his gaze was fixed on a cage load of monkeys which came along just then.

"Who was the old gentleman who snatched Trouble from the elephant, Richard?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"I don't know, my dear."

"You don't know?" Mrs. Martin was much surprised.

"No. Just as he was trying to tell me his name and where he lived, so I could take more time to thank him, the crowd surged in and he was swept away. I'll try to locate him later and tell him how much obliged we are."

"I hope you can. But it will be very hard to locate him in this crowd."

"I'm afraid so," murmured Mr. Martin. "But I would like to find that man again."

The Curlytops were looking with delight at the wonders of the parade. William shared their joy, not worrying much about what had so nearly happened to him.

While the procession is wending its way along I shall take just a few moments to let my new readers know something about the Curlytops and the adventures they have had in the books that come before this one.

Teddy and Janet Martin lived with their father and mother and William in the Eastern town of Cresco. Mr. Martin kept a general store and had a good business. Ted and Janet were always glad when they were allowed to go to their father's store, for there was much to see and do there.

But they had more exciting adventures than this. In the first book of the series, called "The Curlytops at Cherry Farm," I told some of the things that happened when they spent their vacation in the country. After that, as related in other books of this series, the Curlytops went to Star Island, they were snowed in, they visited Uncle Frank's ranch, they went to Silver Lake, they had much fun with their pets—the animals Uncle Toby collected. During the holidays the Curlytops had fun with their playmates, and after that they went to visit a lumber camp in the woods.

There, too, they had many good times and some strange adventures happened to them. They had been home some little time when this story opens.

Teddy, as I have told you, was about a year older than Janet, and Trouble, or William, was aged about four. I have already given you the reason why Ted and Janet were called "Curlytops," so now, I think, you are well enough acquainted with the children, and I may go on with the story.

"Well, I think this is the last of the procession," said Mr. Martin when, finally, the

calliope, or "steam piano," as the children called it, tooted its way along the street.

"Isn't there any more?" asked Janet, with a sigh.

"No more," her father answered.

"Circus parades can't last forever," said Mrs. Martin, with a smile.

"I wish they could," remarked Teddy. "But, anyhow, we're going to see the big show this afternoon, aren't we, Daddy?" he cried.

"Well, perhaps, maybe, I guess so," teased the father of the Curlytops.

"Oh, aren't we going? Haven't you got the tickets for the seats? You said you'd get reserved seats!" cried Ted and Janet in chorus.

"Maybe I have lost the tickets," went on Mr. Martin, pretending to search through several pockets, as the crowds in the street slowly filtered away.

"Oh, if you have!" sighed Janet.

"Don't tease them, Richard," urged Mrs. Martin. "Of course you are going to see the circus," she said. "Daddy is only fooling."

"The nellifunt—he eats peanuts!" observed Trouble.

"Yes, and he nearly ate *you*!" cried Janet, giving her little brother a loving hug.

"I never was so frightened in all my life!" murmured Mrs. Martin. "Oh, I thought you would never get down there to him, Dick," and she looked at her husband.

"I never would have gotten there in time to take him away from the elephant," said Mr. Martin. "If it hadn't been for that old gentleman——"

"We simply must find him and thank him!" interrupted Mrs. Martin. "Look and see if you can locate him, Dick," she urged her husband.

Mr. Martin tried, but it would have been hard to locate even a friend in that moving crowd, to say nothing of trying to pick out a stranger seen only once. The white-haired man and his gentle wife seemed to have disappeared.

"It's too bad you didn't tell him your name, so he could find us," said Mrs. Martin.

"I never thought of that," her husband answered. "But maybe I'll see him again, though he looked like a stranger in town." Mr. Martin knew a great many persons in Cresco because so many of them traded at

his store. He was certain he had never before seen this old man.

However, nothing more could be done. Pausing to thank Mr. Harrison for the use of his stoop in viewing the parade, Mr. and Mrs. Martin slowly made their way through the now clearing streets to their home. Norah Jones and Patrick, the man-of-all-work, had just arrived.

"Wasn't it a grand parade, children?" cried jolly Norah. "It was elegant entirely, wasn't it?"

"Dandy!" declared Teddy.

"And Trouble 'most got stepped on by an elephant!" exclaimed Janet.

"No! Never! Did he?" gasped Norah.

"Yes," affirmed Janet. "And——"

"A nice old man pulled him out from under the elephant's foot," broke in Teddy, making certain Janet should not tell all the exciting news.

"Oh, fancy that now! Did you ever hear the like?" murmured Norah. "I'm glad I didn't see it! I'd never sleep a wink all night. Oh, the poor little dear—to be stepped on by one of the big beasts!"

"But he didn't step on me!" announced Trouble. "An' he took my peanuts—the

nellifunt did, an' I'm going to give more peanuts to more nellifunts this afternoon at the big show, I am," he declared.

"Well, be careful, darling," begged Norah, who was very fond of baby William. "And have you no idea who the old gentleman was who saved him?" the girl asked Mrs. Martin.

"Not the slightest; no. Just as Mr. Martin was going to find out, the crowd swept him away. Well, it can't be helped, I suppose."

The Curlytops, and Trouble also, were so excited about the prospect of going to see the big circus that they hardly ate any lunch. However, by keeping at them, their mother made them take enough to keep them from being hungry very soon again.

Impatiently the children waited for the time to arrive when they could start for the circus grounds. As it was a little distance off, Mr. Martin decided to take the whole party in his car, since down near the circus lots there would be room to park and police on hand to look after the automobiles.

So then, behold, a little later, the Curlytops and their friends on the way to the big show. It was soon reached, and when the car had been safely parked, Mr. Martin led

his party (including Norah and Patrick) toward the main tent.

"We must see the animals first," stipulated Ted. "Then we can go in the other tent and see the performance."

The animals were viewed in their circle of cages, and Trouble was delighted when he was allowed to put several peanuts in the outstretched trunk of the biggest elephant.

"I wonder if that's the one which nearly stepped on him," murmured Janet to Ted.

"Oh, is this the lad who nearly caused the riot in the parade this morning?" asked one of the elephant keepers, standing near the big beasts.

"Yes, this is the chap," answered Mr. Martin, with a laugh. "He got away from us."

"And my elephant nearly got away from me when he saw that bag of peanuts," laughed the man.

"Oh, then this is the same elephant?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"Yes. He wouldn't have harmed your little boy. Burmah is as gentle as a baby," and the keeper let the elephant wind its big trunk around him while he rubbed the ani-

mal's chest. "He just got a bit excited; that's all."

Trouble laughed, called the big beast "my nellifunt," fed it more peanuts, and then the party went into the tent where the performance was soon to take place.

Soon after they were all in their seats, late comers being hustled off the track by the circus men, there was a blast of music, a blare of trumpets, and the opening procession started to wind its way around the dirt ring. Inside the big circle were other rings and platforms. Sawdust and finely chipped wood was scattered over the brown earth and the grass, crushed under thousands of trampling feet.

"Oh, isn't this wonderful—just wonderful!" murmured Janet, as the gayly attired horses paraded around and the band played stirring music.

"It's nifty!" Ted exclaimed.

Then Janet, turning her head to look sideways across the seated throng, saw something that made her exclaim:

"Oh, Mother! Look!"

"What! Has Trouble fallen through the seats?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"No!" answered Janet. "But there's the

man who pulled Trouble out of the way of the elephant! There he is, sitting right over there!" and Janet pointed. "See him!"

Mrs. Martin had a glimpse of a white-haired gentleman with an elderly lady sitting next to him in the row just ahead of the Curlytops, and a little to one side.

"Look, Richard—the man who saved Trouble!" said Mrs. Martin to her husband.

Just then William gave a cry of dismay. His bag of peanuts (which he was saving to feed to the elephant on his way out) seemed to fly out of his hand. The bag burst, showering the nuts on the head of the white-haired gentleman.

CHAPTER III

JANET'S PIE

TALKING about it afterward, Ted remarked that he was glad none of the circus acts had started, because he would have missed some of them in watching the old gentleman. The parade around the circus ring was just over when Trouble, by accident, flung his bag of peanuts on the head of the old gentleman who had saved him from the elephant that morning.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Janet, as she saw what her little brother had done.

"Trouble, my dear!" murmured Mrs. Martin.

"Careful, son," warned Mr. Martin, but it was too late for any warning.

However, no great harm was done. The old gentleman with the beautiful white hair turned with a smile when he saw what it was

that had hit him. Some of the peanuts had scattered from the bag into his wife's lap.

Gathering up these nuts, the old gentleman put them back in the bag and, handing them to Trouble said, with a smile:

"Thank you, little man, but I can't eat peanuts. I used to like them when I was a lad, but my teeth aren't so good now. Save them for the elephant."

"That's what I was doin'," Trouble replied, as he took the bag in his chubby fingers. "I did give the nellifunt some and——"

By this time the old gentleman had seen who Trouble was, and he also knew Mr. Martin, who was looking at him and smiling.

"Why, why!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "You're the same little boy who nearly got stepped on by the elephant in the parade this morning, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir," answered Trouble. "I guess I am."

"Indeed he is!" exclaimed Mrs. Martin. "And I've been anxious to meet you and thank you for what you did. My husband tried to find out your name and where you lived, but——"

"The crowd was too much for us," in-

terrupted the old gentleman, with a laugh. "I looked for the little boy afterward, to see if he was all right, but I couldn't find him, and I was anxious to get my wife out of the crowd."

"I'm glad to meet you again," said Trouble's father. "My name is Martin. I'm in business here in town, and I wish you would come and see me. Bring your wife and call some evening."

"Yes, please do," urged Mrs. Martin.

The Curlytops listened to this talk, and they were glad none of the acts had begun, for they wanted to hear what was said, but if the performers had been in the ring they would have wanted to look at them.

As for Trouble, he was looking with big eyes all around the tent, for to him everything was wonderful, though, as yet, the circus performance had not really begun. He was also slyly eating a few peanuts, though he had promised to save them for the "nellifunt."

"My wife and I would like to come and see you," answered the old gentleman. "My name is Harry Keller. My wife and I are in Cresco for only a few days, visiting relatives."

"Where is your home?" asked Mr. Martin, while Janet, clutching her father's sleeve, whispered:

"Oh, Daddy! The trapezers are coming in now! Look at the trapezers!"

"Yes, dear," murmured Mr. Martin, as a number of men and women in wonderful pink silk suits bounded into a center ring and began pulling themselves up on ropes and bars.

"Oh, look!" cried Ted. "There's a man going to jump over three elephants' backs!"

"Is that the same nellifunt what 'most stepped on me?" Trouble wanted to know, but no one answered him.

"I live in Pocono," answered Mr. Keller.

"Pocono? Why, that's where Uncle Toby lives!" exclaimed Mrs. Martin. "Perhaps you know him? His name is Bardeen."

"Of course I know Mr. Bardeen," said Mr. Keller. "He and I are old friends."

"Then we must call around and see you, and have you visit us, even if you are here for but a few days," said Mr. Martin, and then, for a time, social talk was hard to carry on, for Janet pulled her father at one side, to tell him to look at some of the circus tricks, and Ted was pulling his mother on

the other side for the same purpose. Trouble, in a whirlwind of joy, was munching peanuts and trying to look two ways at the same time.

It was a wonderful circus. Never were there such exciting animal tricks! Never such skillful trapeze performers, never such funny clowns! How the children laughed when one clown, dressed like a policeman, started to arrest another clown dressed as a farmer. The farmer clown pushed the policeman clown down and then jumped on him.

But under his coat the policeman clown wore a rubber bag, blown up with air. And when the farmer clown jumped on it—up he bounced like a ball.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" screamed Trouble, in wild delight.

"And look at that man! He's going to do a high dive from the top of the tent!" cried Ted, pointing to a performer in red tights standing on a little platform at the top of the center pole.

"Oh, I can't bear to look at him!" murmured Mrs. Martin, covering her eyes with her hands.

However, the man jumped safely amid

great applause, and then followed other tricks and animal acts. During a pause in the performance Mrs. Keller leaned back and said to Mrs. Martin:

"My husband and I are on our vacation; or rather, it is his vacation and I am spending it with him."

"That's nice," murmured the mother of the Curlytops. "Are you going to spend all your vacation in Cresco?"

"Indeed, no," answered Mrs. Keller, while her husband and Mr. Martin were talking together. "We are going to the seashore in a few days—to Sunset Beach."

Janet heard the words "Sunset Beach," and at once exclaimed:

"Why, that's where we are going!"

"Where, my dear?" asked Mrs. Keller.

"To Sunset Beach!" went on Janet. "That's where we are going for our vacation! Aren't we, Mother?"

"Yes, dear," answered Mrs. Martin. "I wonder if it is the same Sunset Beach where we have taken a cottage," the Curlytops' mother said to Mrs. Keller.

"The Sunset Beach where my husband and I are going is near Oceanside City, the big summer resort," Mrs. Keller explained.

"Then it's the same one!" exclaimed Ted, who had been listening earnestly while waiting for more circus acts to start.

"How delightful!" murmured Mrs. Martin. "I hope we shall see more of one another down there. You must call on me, and I'll come to see you before we go—we shan't start for another week."

"Nor we," added Mrs. Keller. "It is quite strange, isn't it," and she smiled, "how my husband should rescue your little boy, and that we should meet in the circus and discover that we are going to the same summer resort?"

"Yes, it is odd," agreed Mrs. Martin.

"I'm glad they're going to Sunset Beach, aren't you, Ted?" asked Janet of her brother.

"Yes," he replied, in a whisper. "They're nice. But look, they're going to have a dog race now with monkeys on their backs! Look, Trouble!"

Trouble was trying to look in so many directions at once that it is a wonder he did not have a sore neck from twisting it so much. But then I almost think young necks must have some rubber in them.

"Oh! Oh, look at the monkeys!" cried Trouble! "And the dogs!"

There followed a delightful time for the children, though really there was so much to view I doubt if they took in more than half of it. However, they enjoyed all they did see.

But a circus cannot last forever. There must be an end some time, and finally when men came around selling tickets for the "grand concert," Ted knew the end was aproaching.

"May we stay for the concert, Daddy?" he asked his father.

"Yes, I think so," was the reply.

"Oh, do you want to?" asked Mrs. Martin, who was anxious to get home.

"I think we may as well," her hsuband said. "We can remain right here in these seats, and, though the concert doesn't amount to much, it will give us a chance to wait for most of the crowd to get out of the big tent."

"That's the reason why I always stay to the concert," said Mr. Keller. "It's easier to get out when the crowd isn't so large."

So he bought tickets for himself and his

wife, and Daddy Martin bought some for his family, and the children were delighted. Into the main tent came the "freaks" from the side shows, and also some men and women who sang while part of the circus band played. Then there were some "acts," and the concert was over.

"But it will give the children a better chance to see the animals in the outer tent," said Mr. Martin. "It won't be so crowded."

"An' I want some peanuts to feed the nellifunt," demanded Trouble.

"Where is that bag of peanuts you had?" asked his sister. "The one you threw on Mr. Keller's head?"

"I eat 'em all up, I did," confessed Trouble.

"O—o—o—oh!" murmured Janet.

There was another delightful half hour for the children in the animal tent, and Trouble not only fed the "nellifunts" some peanuts, but also gave a few to one of the cute little Shetland ponies.

And then, much to the regret of the Curlytops, it was time to go home, though they pleaded to stay "just a little longer."

"But it is almost time for supper, my dears," objected Mother. "Come, I think

you have had quite enough of circus for one day."

"Well, anyhow, we'll have some fun at Sunset Beach," said Janet.

"Yes," agreed her brother, "we'll have lots of fun there."

"And we'll see Mr. and Mrs. Keller," added Janet.

Not only were they to see these new friends at Sunset Beach, but the Curlytops were to have a part in a strange happening with the old gentleman and his wife. I'll tell you about that when the right time comes.

Mr. and Mrs. Keller had taken leave of the Martins outside the animal tent, and there had been promises on both sides to call before the summer trip to Sunset Beach should have been taken.

Janet dreamed that night she had a baby lion for a pet and it would carry around in its teeth her best rag doll. Teddy dreamed he was an elephant driver and rode his animal up into the clouds.

It was several days after this, during which preparations were begun for the summer outing at Sunset Beach, that Mrs. Martin had to go downtown shopping. There was no school, the long vacation having be-

gun, and Teddy and Janet were at home.

"Watch Trouble while I'm away," said Mrs. Martin.

"I will," promised Janet.

The little fellow was playing out in the yard, where his sister could keep an eye on him, and Norah, who had been busy in the kitchen, came into the sitting room where Janet was playing with her doll, to say:

"I have to go to the corner grocery, Janet. I need some cinnamon to make apple pies. You'll be all right for a little while, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, Norah," Janet answered. "Anyhow, Patrick is here."

"To be sure he is," said Norah, and she knew she would not have to worry. She might even be able to stop a few minutes and chat with Mary, the maid from next door, who usually went to the store about this time.

After Norah had gone Janet strolled out into the kitchen. She saw where Norah had started to make the pies, and at once a bold thought came into Janet's mind.

"I'll make a pie myself," she said. "I've often watched mother and Norah, so I know

how. I don't need any cinnamon in my pie. I'll make it without."

The flour, water, lard and other things that go to make pie dough were already on the table. Doing as nearly as she could remember having seen her mother and Norah do, Janet mixed up in a brown bowl some flour, lard and milk.

"Oh, it feels just lovely on your hands!" she said to Ted, who stuck his head in the kitchen door to ask what his sister was doing. "It's just like the squidgie mud we play with at the pond."

"You can't make a pie!" scoffed Ted.

"I can so!" insisted Janet. "I'll show you! I'll have it in the oven before Norah comes back and s'prise her!"

"I guess nobody could eat your pie after you made it!" laughed teasing Ted.

"I think you're real mean!" declared Janet, with the beginning of a tear in each eye. "If you want some of my pie you can't have it—so there!"

"Oh, well, maybe it will be all right," laughed Ted, feeling a bit sorry for what he had said. "And if it's good I'll eat some. But why don't you put the apples in?" he asked, seeing some of the sliced fruit in a

bowl on the table. Norah had gotten the apples ready for her pies. "I'll put them in for you," offered Ted, and he raised the sliced apples toward the bowl where Janet was mixing up the sticky dough.

"No! No! They don't go in here *yet*!" cried the little girl. "I have to roll out the crust first, like mother does! Oh, you stop, Ted Martin!" she wailed, as her brother tossed a few pieces of apple into the dough. "I'll tell mother on you! Oh, now look what you did!"

For as Janet raised one arm to keep Ted from putting any more of the sliced apples into the dough, something happened. The next minute the bowl of dough crashed to the floor, a mixture of milk, flour, lard and other things, and began running over the oilcloth.

"Oh! Oh!" gasped Janet.

"Um!" grunted Ted.

Then the front doorbell rang.

CHAPTER IV

TED'S TUMBLE

THERE was silence in the house of the Curlytops for a few moments after the ringing of the front doorbell. Ted and Janet stood in the center of the kitchen, looking first at one another and then at the floor, covered with dough, milk and sliced apples.

Again the bell rang.

"Ted, you'll have to go!" exclaimed Janet.

"Me go? Look at me! All milk!" gasped Ted. "You go and see who it is!"

Once more the bell rang, this time longer than before.

"Ted, you've *got* to go!" exclaimed his sister.

"Aw, well, I'll go," replied Ted, not very eager. He took out his handkerchief and wiped off some of the milk that had splashed on him. Slowly he shuffled to the front door. As he opened it he started back in surprise.

Ted expected to see, perhaps, a peddler or an agent. He knew it could not be his mother, for she would either have let herself in with a key or have come to the back door. Any neighbor would also have come to the back entrance for an informal call. But this was a different visitor.

It was Mrs. Keller, the white-haired wife of Mr. Keller, the gentleman who had pulled Trouble from beneath the feet of the elephant.

"Oh!" gasped Ted, in surprise. Then again he said: "Oh!"

"How do you do, my dear?" asked Mrs. Keller, in her gentle voice. "I have come to pay a little visit to your mother. My husband and I are going to Sunset Beach rather sooner than we expected, and I wanted to see your mother again before we left. I want to give her my address at the seashore."

By this time Teddy had begun to remember some of his manners, and he opened the door wider and murmured:

"Come in, please. Mother isn't here, but she'll be back soon, and——"

Ted looked down at his knickerbockers and discovered a chunk of dough clinging to one knee. He reached down, hoping to

get it off before Mrs. Keller saw it. But as she was coming into the hall she noticed it and asked:

"What's that?"

"Oh—er—now that—that's—pie dough!" and Ted, in desperation, blurted out the words.

"Pie dough?" repeated Mrs. Keller.

"Yes," explained the boy. "You see my sister was making a pie—and my hand slipped and—now—the pie spilled on the floor. It's on the floor now—it hasn't been baked yet—I mean the pie hasn't," Ted added, as he finally got the lump of dough off his knee and began rolling it between his fingers.

"Oh, that's too bad!" exclaimed Mrs. Keller. "I suppose you were helping your sister make the pie, to surprise your mother when she comes home. That was very nice of you, I'm sure. But perhaps——"

Ted was an honest little boy. He did not want Mrs. Keller to think that he was trying to help Janet when he wasn't. So he made haste to say:

"No'm, I wasn't just exactly helping Janet. She was making the pie all by herself, and I came in and I was going to put

some of the sliced apples in the bowl of dough and—and—well, the pie got spilled—that's all I know."

Mrs. Keller smiled at Teddy. I think she understood just what had happened, for she said:

"Well, I'm sure you didn't mean to spill the pie, though perhaps it would have been just as well for you to have stayed out of the kitchen when your sister was baking. I wonder if your mother would mind if I went out to see if there is anything I could do?"

"I guess she'd be glad to have you," Ted answered.

"I suppose it is rather odd of me, on my first visit, to go into a strange, kitchen—especially when a pie has been spilled," went on the caller. "But I know just how your sister must feel."

"Come on out," invited Ted, backing through the hall door in the direction of the kitchen.

"I'll just take off some of my things," said Mrs. Keller, removing her hat and gloves.

Janet, meanwhile, had been standing in the middle of the disordered kitchen, won-

dering who it was that had rung the bell. She heard the murmur of voices, but the tones (except for those of Ted) were not those of any acquaintance. At last Janet could stand her curiosity no longer.

Tiptoeing to the door that led into the hall, she opened it slightly and hoarsely whispered:

"Who is it, Ted?"

At that moment Ted was escorting the lady caller down the hall, and he almost bumped into Janet as he answered:

"It's Mrs. Keller!"

"Oh! Oh!" murmured Janet. And then she remembered what a state she was in—milk and pie dough down the front of her apron. She thought of how the kitchen looked—milk and pie dough all over the floor. "Oh! Oh!" murmured the little girl again.

Mrs. Keller had once had children of her own, though they were now grown up, married and moved away. But she remembered some of the sad and worrisome spots of childhood, and she must have guessed how Janet felt.

"There, my dear!" she said kindly, "don't worry. It was an accident, I'm sure, and

couldn't have been helped. Never mind how you look, or how the kitchen looks. I'm coming out to help you clean up."

"Oh," sighed Janet, "I—I guess it needs it."

And if ever a kitchen did need cleaning up, it was the Martin kitchen at that moment.

However, Mrs. Keller did not exclaim, or say "what a dreadful sight!" or anything like that. She just smiled, patted Janet on her shoulder in a friendly way, and said:

"Now, don't worry. It won't take long, and we'll soon have everything as clean as when mother went away. And, if you'll let me, I'll finish making the pie for you."

"But we haven't any cinnamon," said Janet.

"I know where there's some!" exclaimed Ted. "I took the box out the other day when Norah was making apple sauce, and I put it up on another shelf. I remember now. I'll get it."

"Then if we have cinnamon, and you had all the rest of what was needed, there is no reason in the world why I can't make an apple pie," said Mrs. Keller. "It won't be

the first one I have made!" she added, with a laugh.

Ted found the cinnamon, and then, at Mrs. Keller's suggestion, he took some warm water, soap and a rag and cleaned his suit as best he could. As Janet wore an apron, her dress did not suffer. Then Mrs. Keller had the children pick up the scattered apples and dough from the floor, and the floor was mopped clean.

Soon the kitchen looked as it had when Mrs. Martin left, and a little later a fine apple pie, made by the quick and skillful hands of the visitor, was browning in the oven.

"Oh, that smells good!" murmured Ted.

"Delicious," sighed Janet. "I'm so glad you came, Mrs. Keller."

"Could I give a piece of pie to a nellifunt?" asked a voice in the doorway, and Trouble entered from his play in the yard.

"Ah, there's the little elephant boy!" laughed Mrs. Keller, as she gathered him up in her arms, for she loved children. "Well, have you seen any circus parades to-day?" she asked.

"No'm. But I saw a hand organ man an' he's got a monkey an' could I have a piece

of pie for the monkey?" William asked, all in one breath.

"Oh, no! We don't want to give Mrs. Keller's nice pie to a monkey!" objected Janet.

"He's a nice monkey," said Trouble.

"Well, you'd better stay in here with me," said Teddy. "Once he followed a hand organ man and a monkey away off down the street," Ted explained to Mrs. Keller, "and we have to watch him."

"Yes, I suppose you do," the visitor said. "Now that the pie is in the oven, and will soon be done, I think I'll wash my hands, for your mother may come along any minute."

"She'll be surprised to see you," ventured Ted.

"And she'll be glad," added Janet.

"I hope she won't think I did too much—making free in her kitchen the way I did," said the caller.

"No, she'll be glad," Ted went on. "I'll tell her what happened, though," he said quickly, with a look at Janet. For he had not forgotten his part in the accident.

"Yes, it is best to tell mother or daddy everything," said the dear old lady. She

took off the apron she had been wearing, washed her hands and was going to sit in the parlor, for the pie would need to bake ten minutes more, when in came Mrs. Martin.

"Oh!" exclaimed the mother of the Curly-tops, as she entered and saw her visitor. "How glad I am to see you, Mrs. Keller," she went on.

"Thank you, I am glad I had a chance to call," was the answer. "I came to say that my husband and I are going to Sunset Beach sooner than we expected, and I want to give you our address there and get yours."

"Oh, Mother," began Janet, when Mrs. Keller had finished. "I was making——"

Just then Norah, who had come back from the grocery with the cinnamon, opened the door from the kitchen and, not knowing there was company, she cried out:

"Who baked the pie that's in the oven?"

At once Mrs. Martin understood that something unusual had happened while she was out.

"Norah, what do you mean?" she asked.

"I was starting to make a pie," the cook explained, "and I had no cinnamon. And when I come back there's a lovely pie baking in the oven and——"

"Mrs. Keller made the pie!" sang out Ted and Janet together.

"Yes, I think I shall have to confess," the visitor said, with a smile. "When I arrived I found your little daughter in trouble, and I helped her out."

"It was—now, it was my fault," manfully confessed Teddy.

Then, by degrees, the whole story was told. Mrs. Martin could not help laughing, though, afterward, she scolded Teddy for doing what he had done to annoy Janet.

"It was very good of you, Mrs. Keller," said the mother of the Curlytops.

"Not at all. I was glad to do it. I have rather missed my own kitchen since my husband and I came away," was the answer.

Then the two ladies sat down to talk while Ted, Janet and Trouble ran out to play.

"Jan, will you keep Trouble with you a little while, so he won't bother me?" asked Teddy. "I'm going to do something."

"What you going to do?" his sister wanted to know.

Leaning over toward Janet to whisper, so William would not hear, Ted answered:

"I'm going to play fireman. I'll let you play when I get everything all fixed, but I

don't want Trouble to come until I'm ready. You play with him."

"All right," agreed his sister. She was pleased with Ted because he had taken the blame for the pie trouble in the kitchen. "Come on, Trouble," she called to her little brother. "We'll go feed the ducks," for Mr. Martin kept a few ducks and some chickens.

Thus relieved, Ted began to plan his fun. As he had said, he wanted to play fireman. There was a short ladder in the garage, and it was Ted's plan to put this up against a shed, where Patrick kept the lawn mower and other garden tools, and climb up, pretending he was a fireman with a hose putting out a blaze on the roof of a ten-story building.

Ted brought out the ladder and leaned it up against the shed. He climbed up part way, and was going higher when he heard the voices of Janet and Trouble shouting. Also he heard the barking of a dog and he thought:

"Oh, maybe a dog is after Trouble! I'd better get down and see!"

Before he could climb down the ladder, however, there came rushing around the

corner of the garage not only a dog, but a cat. The dog was chasing the cat, and after them came Trouble and Janet.

The cat, with her tail fluffed out as large as a bologna sausage, was headed toward Ted's ladder, thinking, perhaps, she could climb it.

"You stop chasing that kitty!" yelled Janet, as she tore along, Trouble doing his best to keep up with her, but not succeeding very well.

"Chief! Chief! Let that cat alone!" shouted Ted at the dog, for the animal was one belonging to Billy Burgett, a chum of Ted's. "Come back, Chief!" shouted Ted, from his perch on the ladder.

But Chief was in no mood to mind. It was the first cat he had chased in over a week, and he was going to make the most of it. With loud barks he raced on after poor pussy.

The cat made a dart for Ted's ladder and did manage to climb up a little way.

"Oh, look at the pussy climbin' a ladder!" shouted Trouble, in delight.

Chief was headed directly for the ladder also, and seeing the danger Ted shouted:

"Get back, Chief! Go 'way! Lie down!"

"Chief! Chief, come here!" shrieked Janet.

The dog, however, barking still more loudly, kept on. Ted began to climb down the ladder, but it was too late.

Chief tried to climb up the rungs to get the cat that was now above Ted's head, but the weight of the Curlytop boy and the dog was too much. The ladder began to slip.

"Look out!" cried Ted.

"Oh! Oh!" gasped Janet.

CHAPTER V

DOWN TO THE SEA

THE cat, as she felt the ladder slipping, made a flying leap, and jumped out of the way. She happened to jump toward Chief, and, as she did so, she stretched out her claws and scratched the dog on his nose.

Chief howled in pain, as any other dog would have done, and then he sat down on a pile of partly dried grass near the ladder, and howled more loudly.

Janet and Trouble saw all this happen in a quick flash. As for Ted, he was so frightened when he felt the ladder slipping that he did not see much of what happened, though he heard Chief howl.

And down fell Teddy and the ladder! But because Patrick had cut the grass that day and had raked a big heap of it near the shed, leaving it just where Teddy had put up his

ladder, the little boy fell on this soft stuff instead of on the hard ground.

And so it happened, very luckily, that Teddy wasn't hurt at all. The ladder, in slipping down, bumped him slightly on the head, but not enough to make him cry. He sat there, on top of the pile of grass, looking very much surprised, gazing at Chief, who was rubbing his scratched nose with one paw. The cat had vanished.

"Oh, wasn't it funny!" laughed Trouble. "Wasn't it funny! Oh, ho!"

"It might not have been if I hadn't fallen on the grass," said Teddy.

"Did you hurt yourself?" asked Janet.

"No, I guess I didn't," he slowly replied. Then he moved about and felt of his legs and arms. "No, I'm all right. Did you sic Chief after the cat?" he asked his sister.

"Course not!" declared Janet. "Trouble and I were feeding the ducks, and along came the cat—it's a strange one, I guess—and then along came Chief, and he chased after the cat."

"And Chief wouldn't come back when I hollered to him," said Trouble. "If I had a peanut, maybe, like I had for the nellifunt, Chief would have come back."

"Are you going to play fireman now?" Janet wanted to know.

Teddy wasn't quite sure whether to go on with his game or not. He had been a bit shaken up by the fall.

"I'm going fishing!" he announced after a moment's thought.

"Fishing?" Janet exclaimed. "Where?"

"Down in the brook. You can come if you like, and so can Trouble. We'll bend up a pin and make him a hook."

"I'll catch a fish!" cried Trouble, as he heard the news that he was to join the party. "I'll put a peanut on my hook and I'll catch a nellifunt fish."

"Oh, all you think of is elephants!" laughed Janet, giving her little brother a hug. "But, Ted," she asked, "do you really think you can catch a fish?"

"Sure, I can!" he said positively. "If we're going down to the seashore we'll fish there, so we'd better practice here. Once I caught a fish in the brook."

This was true. Teddy had managed to trade off an old, broken knife to Tom Taylor in exchange for a rusty fish hook and a tangle of line. Ted untangled the line, fastened it to a pole he cut from the lilac

bush, dug up a worm, baited his hook and caught a little sunfish. Ever since then, whenever other play failed, Ted announced that he was going fishing. But, up to this time, he had never caught another thing.

However, he never gave up hope, nor did Janet, for she, too, wanted to feel the thrill of a nibble on her hook. Ted, meanwhile, had traded off a battered top for another rusty hook and tangle of line to Harry Kent, and this second line he gave to Janet.

So they each had a pole and line, though the hooks were more rusty than at first. They were not very sharp, either, for which Mrs. Martin was glad, for she did not wish the Curlytops to get a hook caught in their hands. However, she said little, for she knew that the best way to make children careful is to let them do some things for themselves, after warning them how to look out for danger.

So, a little later, the Curlytops and Trouble were on their way to the brook which ran not far from the house. It was a pretty stream of water, not very wide and not very deep, running now through a clump of willow trees and again through bright,

green meadows where cows cropped the grass and drank from the pools.

Ted and Janet had real poles, lines and hooks, but all Trouble was allowed to carry was a bent pin dangling on the end of a bit of cord tied to a stick. However, this was all he wanted.

Ted had dug himself some worms. Janet, who could not bear to put the wiggling things on her hook, had begged from Norah some scraps of meat from the ice box.

"The fish will bite on them just the same as on worms," said Janet.

"We'll fish in the shade under the willow trees," decided Ted. "The water's deeper there, and you can get bigger fish in deep water."

"We must look out that Trouble doesn't fall in," Janet said.

"I'll watch him," offered Ted.

It was pleasant in the shade of the drooping willow trees, at the foot of which the brook ran silent and rather deep. Ted pointed out a place on the sloping bank where his sister and brother could sit and cast in. Janet baited Trouble's bent pin hook with a bit of meat and then her own. Ted put on a wiggling worm.

For a few minutes after they had cast in, the children kept silence. That was part of the fishing game—not to make any more noise than you could help. Whether or not fish can hear under water, I don't know; but I remember, when I was a boy, I always tried to be quiet when I was after fish.

Suddenly Janet, who was sitting near Trouble, looked across at Ted and exclaimed:

"I got a nibble!"

"Keep still!" whispered Ted. "Do you want to scare all the fish away? If you have a bite, pull in!"

Cautiously Janet raised her pole, lifting the line from the water.

"You've got to pull quicker and harder than that if you want to catch a fish!" declared Ted. "Say, you have a big bite!" he added, as he saw his sister's line swishing through the water and the end of her pole bending. "I didn't think you'd get such a big bite on a piece of meat! Pull in! Pull in!"

Janet pulled. But whatever it was on the end of her line under water, also pulled. Janet leaned over in her excitement. Her line was given a sudden jerk and, the next

moment, into the water fell poor Janet with a great splash!

"Oh! Oh!" cried Trouble, and he began to sob.

Teddy acted quickly. Dropping his pole, he leaped in after his sister and raised her up from the water. Though the brook was deeper here than at any other point, it was not more than up to the waist of the Curlytops, and Janet was soon out of danger.

She and Ted stood up, dripping wet, and gasping for breath, but not otherwise harmed.

"Oh! Oh, is you drowned?" cried Trouble, from the bank.

"N-n-no! I—I'm all right!" gasped Janet. "Don't cry, Trouble!"

"And don't you fall in!" added Ted, with a laugh. "Two is enough in one day. Say, we're soaked!" he cried in dismay, for he had gone in deeper than he had supposed, and so had Janet.

"Well, it's a nice hot day and we'll soon dry," remarked his sister, as they waded to the bank. "It's like going in bathing at the seashore," she added.

"Say, we'll have fun down there all right!" Teddy said. "Oh, but look at your

pole!" he cried. "The fish is still on the hook and it's taking your pole away! I'll get it!"

Making sure that Janet was all right, Ted let go of her and made a dive for the pole.

"Say, you have got a big one!" he shouted. "No wonder it pulled you in! Come and help me, Jan! I can't get him up!"

Forgetting all about their accident and the fact that they were wet from head to foot, the Curlytops pulled on Janet's pole. The creature that had hold of the hook pulled also, but the children proved the stronger, and at last hauled out on shore—

A big mud turtle!

"Oh, look what was on my hook!" cried Janet.

"A turtle!" gasped Ted. "Say, that's bigger than a fish!"

"But it isn't any good," Janet said. "You can't eat a mud turtle."

"Maybe we can," said Teddy. "We'll take him home and maybe Norah will know how to cook him."

"I want to see turkle!" cried Trouble.

"You stay back there!" ordered Ted to his little brother. "If you don't, you'll fall

in. I'll bring the turtle up so you can see it."

"Look out it doesn't bite you," warned Janet. "Maybe it's a snapper! Look out, Ted!"

However, Ted was to get into no danger. For as he made a dash for the turtle the creature let go the hook and scrambled down the bank and into the water with a plopping splash.

"Oh, there he goes!" cried Janet, in disappointment.

"I guess he was only holding to the hook with his teeth," said Ted, "and he could let go when he wanted to. But I almost had him."

The children caught nothing more that day. They did not have so much as a nibble, and Ted was quite disappointed.

"Well, anyhow, we had fun," he said, as, an hour or so later, they walked slowly toward the house. The sun and the warm wind had nearly dried him and Janet. But one could easily tell they had fallen in, and Mrs. Martin guessed it without being told, though of course the Curlytops related what had happened.

It was not the first time they had fallen into the brook.

"You must be more careful," said Mrs. Martin. "We are soon going to the seashore, you know, and if you fall into the ocean it will not be so easy to get out as it is from the brook."

"We'll be careful," promised the Curlytops, and they really meant to be. But of course accidents will happen.

A few evenings after this Mr. and Mrs. Martin called on Mr. and Mrs. Keller, where the old gentleman and his wife were visiting relatives in Cresco. The Curlytops and Trouble stayed at home.

"When are you going to Sunset Beach?" asked Mrs. Keller.

"The first of next week," answered Mrs. Martin.

"We leave to-morrow," Mr. Keller said. "This is the first long vacation I have had in a number of years."

"Are you in business in Pocono, where Mr. Bardeen lives?" asked Mr. Martin.

"Yes, I am a sort of secretary for Amos Narr."

"The millionaire?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"Yes, he is a very wealthy man," said Mr. Keller.

"And very odd and peculiar," added Mrs. Keller. "Sometimes I think he is very cross and ugly."

"Oh, no, my dear," objected her husband. "Mr. Narr, though, is very particular about his business. He wants everything done just so and right, and he will not take any excuses for mistakes. He is a hard man to work for, but he is not what you could call ugly."

"He gets cross, doesn't he?" asked Mrs. Keller.

"Yes, sometimes he gets very cross. I don't like to work for him; but when you get to be as old as I am," Mr. Keller said, with a sigh, "you have to work wherever you can. You can't pick and choose."

"No, I suppose not," Mr. Martin said. "Well, we shall see you at Sunset Beach," he added, as he and his wife made ready to leave. "And I hope there are no 'nellifunts' there," he concluded, with a laugh.

"If there are, Trouble will be sure to find them!" said Mrs. Martin. "And I shall be glad to have Mr. Kellar there to rescue him."

"It's Trouble's turn to rescue me,"

laughed the old gentleman, and neither he nor any of the others dreamed how nearly true this was going to be.

The next day Mr. and Mrs. Keller left Cresco for Sunset Beach, and the Martins promised to look them up later, when they arrived.

"Oh, I can hardly wait for the time to come!" exclaimed Janet, counting off the days on her fingers.

"We'll have dandy times down at Sunset Beach!" said Teddy.

At last the day came when they were to go down to the sea. They went by train, for it was rather long for an auto trip, though one of Mr. Martin's men was to drive the car down so it could be used during the summer.

The train journey, though rather tiresome, was over at last. Mrs. Martin said she never knew Trouble could drink as much water as he did. He seemed to want some one to go to the cooler and bring him a paper cup of the liquid about every five minutes.

"Well, it is a very hot day, and water is good for him," said Mr. Martin. "I'm glad we could come to the shore this summer. I think we are in for a long, hot spell of weather."

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when the train, after stopping at Oceanside City, swung around a curve and at last the station of Sunset Beach was in view. The resort was called Sunset Beach because it was on the eastern side of a big bay, and when the sun went down in the west, its rays flooded the beach with golden light.

"I'm going in swimming!" yelled Ted, almost as soon as he was out of the train.

"I'm going in wading!" said Janet. "Oh, I can smell the ocean now!" and she took a long breath.

"Are you sure you have all your bundles and things?" asked Mr. Martin, when the train was about to pull out of the station after they had gotten off.

Just then Mrs. Martin gave a cry of alarm.

"What's the matter?" asked her husband.

"Trouble!" she answered. "He must have gone back on the train again after I lifted him off. Trouble is on the train!" The train began to move slowly. "Stop it!" screamed the mother of Trouble. "Stop it! Stop the train!"

CHAPTER VI

AT SUNSET BEACH

THE train conductor, who had climbed up on the steps, after helping down Mrs. Martin and the children, quickly reached up to grasp the signal cord on hearing the cries of alarm. The cord blew a little whistle in the cab of the engineer—the whistle taking the place of the old-fashioned bell.

In an instant the engineer clapped on the brakes, and the train, which had only begun to move slowly away from the station, came to a sudden stop.

"What is the matter, madam?" asked the conductor. "Did you leave some of your baggage in the car?"

"My little boy—William—is in there!" answered his mother. "He must have gone back up the steps when my back was turned."

"Well, he'll be all right. Don't worry," advised the conductor, kindly.

"I'll get him!" offered Mr. Martin, with a laugh. "There was a little girl with some picture books in the aisle across from William," he explained, "and I think Trouble climbed back there to get another look at the pictures. I'll get him!"

While some passengers stuck their heads out of windows to find the cause for the sudden stopping of the train, after it had started, Mr. Martin and the conductor made their way into the car that had just been left.

But, to the surprise of the father of the Curlytops, William was not in there. The little girl and her mother, in whom the small lad had been much interested, were still looking at the picture book, but Trouble was not in sight.

"That's queer," murmured Mr. Martin. "Excuse me," he spoke to the lady with the little girl, "but did you see my little boy come back into this car? He got off with us, but we missed him after we had taken stock of our bags, and I thought he had climbed back on the train again."

"No, he didn't come in here," said the lady.

"That's queer!" murmured Trouble's father.

"Maybe he got in one of the other cars," suggested the conductor. "Though he'd have to be pretty lively on his feet to do that."

"Trouble is pretty quick," said Mr. Martin.

He hurried out on the car platform and met his wife's anxious look.

"He isn't in here," said the father.

"Oh!" she gasped. "I wonder——"

"There he is! There he is!" suddenly cried Ted and Janet, and a moment later they all saw Trouble over on the station platform. The little fellow was standing up on his tiptoes, trying to put a penny in the slot of a chocolate and gum machine hanging on the wall of the station near the ticket office.

"Oh, the little tyke!" exclaimed his mother. "He must have slipped away to spend his penny the moment I set him on the ground off the car steps."

"Sorry to have made you all this trouble,"

remarked Mr. Martin to the train conductor. "Very sorry, indeed!"

"Oh, that's all right!" was the good-natured answer. "We're used to lost children on these shore trains in the summer. It's part of our job to help hunt for them."

"I hope you won't be late on your trip," went on the father of the Curlytops.

"Oh, no, we're about on time. A few minutes more or less won't make much difference."

Once more he pulled the signal cord. There came two small, shrill whistles in the locomotive cab, the engineer pulled open the throttle, and once more the cars rolled on their way, taking other vacationists to other beaches. The passengers pulled their wondering heads in from the windows and all was as it should be—except for Trouble.

"Oh, you little tyke," cried his mother, half scolding him, as was proper, "why did you run away the moment my back was turned, giving us such a fright? Why did you do it, William?"

She seldom called him William unless he had done something very wrong, as he had done this time.

"Why did you run away and go over to

the platform by yourself, William?" asked his father.

" 'Cause—now—I had a penny," was the answer. "I had a penny an' I wanted to get some candy for the nellifunt!"

"Oh, you and your elephants!" sighed Janet. "Will you ever get over them?"

"There aren't any elephants here at Sunset Beach," said Ted, who was ready to help his father gather up the bags and bundles, to put them in a station auto in which the trip was to be made to the cottage the Martins had taken for the summer.

"Maybe there's a nellifunt," said Trouble, who had been brought back from the candy machine by Janet. "An' I want my piece of candy for a penny!"

"Didn't you get the piece of candy out of the machine?" asked Ted.

"Nope," and Trouble shook his head. "I put my penny in, I did," he said, "but there didn't any candy come out for the nellifunt!"

"I guess he couldn't press the handle in hard enough," suggested Janet.

"I'll get the candy for you," kindly offered Teddy. He ran over to the machine. Trouble's penny was still in the slot where

he had dropped it, but, as Jan had guessed, the little fellow's chubby fingers had not been strong enough to press the pusher handle.

Ted gave it a shove, there was a click, and down on the lower tray dropped a little square of chocolate in a tinfoil wrapper.

"There you are, Trouble," his brother said, taking the candy to him.

At last the Curlytops and their relatives, together with the baggage, were gathered into the auto and a little later they were at the cottage Mr. Martin had hired for the summer. Norah had been brought down to do the cooking, but Patrick had been left at home.

"Oh, how near it is to the ocean!" cried Janet as, after the cottage had been opened, she caught a glimpse of the shining water at the end of the street.

"May we go down, Mother?" asked Ted.

"Yes, for a little while," was the answer.

"Me come!" cried Trouble.

"Look after him," warned Mr. Martin, as William followed his brother and sister on the run.

"We will," they promised.

The beach was only a short distance from

the cottage which was on a street running right down to the water. There were several other cottages on the same street as that on which the Martins' house was situated, but some of these cottages were not yet opened, the occupants planning to arrive later.

"Oh, isn't it lovely here?" sighed Janet.

"Dandy!" cried Ted.

"I's goin' to dig in the sand," announced William, finding a shell for a shovel.

"I guess you can't get hurt doing that," Janet remarked.

She and Ted strolled along the beach, on which the white-capped waves were breaking with a rumble, tumble and roar, although the waves in this big bay were not as high as those on the Atlantic side of the stretch of land between the bay and the open ocean.

"Oh, look!" suddenly said Jan to Ted. "There's Mr. and Mrs. Keller! Oh, I'm so glad we've seen them! Come on over and we can show them where our cottage is."

"Where are they?" asked Ted.

"Right down there, on the sand. See that old gentleman and lady just sitting down under the sun umbrella?"

Janet pointed and Ted saw an elderly couple making themselves comfortable on

the sand. They had opened a big red and yellow striped umbrella, for the sun was beating down on the beach, though not very hotly, for it was well down in the sky.

"Let's surprise 'em," suggested Ted, filled with a sudden spirit of mischief.

"How?" asked Janet, making sure Trouble was safe playing on the sand, well out of reach of the waves.

"Let's go up softly and tip over the umbrella and holler 'Boo!' "

"All right!" Janet agreed. "They won't mind."

"No," said Ted. "They're real jolly!"

Brother and sister went on tiptoe across the sand, up behind the big sun umbrella. Catching hold of one edge of it, Ted tipped it to one side. Then he and Janet yelled:

"Boo!"

But what was their astonishment to see, looking at them with rather startled faces, a perfectly strange man and woman. Both had white hair, but they were not Mr. and Mrs. Keller at all!

CHAPTER VII

LOST IN THE SAND

JANET and Ted stopped short in their tracks after tipping over the umbrella. They stood there, looking at the strange man and woman—that's what the Curlytops did.

As for the couple under the sun-shade—they, too, were so surprised for a few moments that they could say nothing. Then, noticing how worried and ashamed the children were, the lady said:

"It's all right, my dears! No harm done at all. I suppose you were playing tag, and you ran so fast you couldn't stop before bumping into our umbrella."

"Yes, we'll forgive you," added the man. "I used to play tag myself when I was a boy. Once I bumped into a cow!"

Ted laughed a little at hearing this, but Janet still looked worried and serious.

"Don't take it so to heart, my dear," said

the lady. "It was an accident. We know you couldn't help tipping over our umbrella."

"Oh, but it wasn't an accident!" exclaimed Janet. She knew that she and her brother must tell the truth.

"It wasn't an accident?" questioned the lady. "Why——"

"We did it on purpose!" added Ted, making up his mind that he must do his share of explaining.

"You did it on *purpose*!" murmured the man, and the laughing smile vanished from his face and something like a frown took its place.

"But we didn't mean to do it to you!" Janet hastened to say. "We didn't know you were under the umbrella."

"You thought it was just an umbrella on the sand, with no one under it, did you?" asked the lady, still smiling.

"No, we knew somebody was under it, 'cause we saw you," said Janet. "But we thought it was Mr. and Mrs. Keller. We know *them,* and Ted thought it would be fun to knock over their umbrella and holler 'boo!' at them. And we did," she concluded.

"Only it wasn't Mr. and Mrs. Keller," grimly sighed Ted. "We're sorry," he went on.

"And we beg your pardon," added Janet.

The man was now smiling again, and the lady laughed aloud.

"Oh, you dear children!" she exclaimed. "How funny you are!"

Ted was glad if any one could see a joke in it. He couldn't, for he thought the strange man and woman would surely tell his father what had happened.

"So you thought we looked like friends of yours, did you?" asked the lady. "Well, mistakes will happen, and we will forgive this one. No harm is done," she said, as Ted brought back the umbrella, which had rolled a little way over the sand.

"Do you children live here?" asked the lady, who, except for her white hair, did not look like Mrs. Keller.

"No, ma'am. We just came here for the summer vacation," explained Ted, who had stuck the end of the umbrella handle down in the sand again.

"And Mr. and Mrs. Keller just came, too, and we thought you were they," said Janet. "That's our little brother over there," and

she pointed to William, who was digging in the sand.

Just then a big wave came rolling toward him. William did not see it, but Ted did, and he called:

"Look out, Trouble! Look out!"

William glanced up and ran back up the beach, but not quite fast enough, for the salt water wet his toes. However, he had taken off his shoes and stockings, so it didn't matter.

"Trouble? Is that his name?" asked the man, in surprise.

"That's what we call him," answered Janet, with a smile. "But his real name is William Anthony Curlytop."

"Curlytop—that's an odd name," murmured the lady.

"That isn't our real name!" chuckled Ted. "What's the matter with you, Jan?" he asked his sister.

"Oh, I'm all mixed up," and she, too, laughed. "Our name is Martin," she said. "I'm Janet and this is Ted. But we call William by the name of Trouble, because Daddy says he gets in it so often."

"Oh, I see," and the lady laughed. "Well, my name is Randall, and this is my husband.

I hope we shall see you children again," she added, as Ted and Janet began to move away. For they thought it was about time they returned to the cottage.

"Yes, we'll be down on the beach every day," said Ted. "Come on, Trouble!" he called to his small brother. "We're going home!"

"I want to dig a well and let water come in it for the nellifunt to drink!" asserted Trouble.

"What does he mean by a *nellifunt*?" asked Mr. Randall.

"He means an elephant—he's crazy about them. He fed them peanuts in the circus," explained Janet.

"And an elephant almost stepped on him in the circus parade. Mr. Keller pulled him out of the way just in time, and that's how we know Mr. and Mrs. Keller," said her brother. "Come on, Trouble! We have to go!" he called.

"I want to make a well an' have water come in for the nellifunt an'——" Trouble was finding many reasons for staying.

"Elephants don't drink salt water," Janet informed William.

This, however, might not have made

Trouble willing to come away. But just then a wave, bigger than any others that had rolled on the beach, came sweeping up. It washed away the sand that William had dug out, and not only filled with salt water the hole he had dug, but it washed the hole away and splashed up to the little boy's ankles.

"I—I guess I go home with you," he mumbled, for he was a bit frightened. "I go home now."

"The tide's coming in," remarked Mr. Randall. "I think we'd better move," he told his wife, as he helped her to arise and then let down the big, striped sun umbrella. "We'll look for you on the beach tomorrow," he told the children.

"We'll look for you," chorused Ted and Janet, and Trouble murmured:

"I dig a big hole an' make water come in for the nellifunt."

"Well, children, how do you like it here?" asked Mrs. Martin, when the three had returned to the cottage, where Norah was getting supper.

"It's great here!" burst out Ted.

"And I digged a well, I did, an' a lot of

water came in, but Jan says nellifunts won't drink salt water!" proclaimed Trouble.

"You ought to have seen us tip over the wrong umbrella!" chuckled Ted.

"Tip over the wrong umbrella! What do you mean?" demanded his mother.

Then the story was told, and though Mrs. Martin looked solemn for a few minutes, she could not help laughing when she found that Mr. and Mrs. Randall were not angry.

"You must be more careful, Curlytops," she said, and Ted and Janet promised that they would.

Supper was rather late, on account of just arriving at a strange cottage, and when the meal was over and the children had played about for a short time, they were glad enough to go to bed.

"You'll have plenty to see and find lots to do to-morrow," said their mother.

"I guess we will," agreed Ted. "I'm going fishing. You can catch terrible big fish in the ocean!" and his eyes opened wide.

"I can have lovely play parties on the sand with my dolls," added Janet.

Trouble had been put to bed near his mother's room.

"I'm goin'—dig a hole for a nelli—for a nellifunt—an'—an'——"

But that was as far as Trouble could get—his voice trailed off into nothing, for he had fallen asleep even as he talked. And soon Ted and Janet had joined him in Slumberland.

Bright and early the next day the Curlytops and Baby William went down on the sand to play. Janet had her dolls—for she carried them around two at a time, and sometimes three. She had a large family of dolls, and they were quite a responsibility, which is another name for trouble, you know.

William carried his sand pail and shovel, and Ted had a collection of shingles, some sticks of wood, bits of wire and string.

"I'm going to make something," he said.

"What?" asked his sister.

"A sand mill. I saw some in a store. You put a lot of sand in a box and the sand runs out and it hits a paddle wheel, like a wheel in a mill, and the sand makes the wheel go around. I'm going to make one."

"I don't believe you can," Janet said.

"Sure, I can!" asserted Ted.

So he began work on what he hoped would

be a sand mill, and Janet laid a cloth down on the beach to put her dolls on it.

"I'm giving them a sun bath," she explained. "I want 'em to get nice and tanned so everybody will know they've been at the seashore."

"Pooh, dolls can't tan!" declared Ted.

"They can so!" retorted his sister.

They might have had a little dispute then, but Trouble went too near the edge of the waves, with his shoes and stockings on, and got his feet wet. Janet had to take off his things and this kept her so busy that she had no time to argue with her brother.

At last the Curlytops were at Sunset Beach, and they loved it very much. It was a wonderful place to spend a summer vacation.

Ted was working away at his sand mill, Janet was playing with her dolls, and Trouble was at work digging a well for a "nellifunt," far enough up the beach to be out of the reach of the waves.

"Well, children, I see you're here!" called a pleasant voice.

For a moment Janet thought it might be Mr. and Mrs. Randall, but a glance showed her and Ted that it was Mr. and Mrs. Keller.

They were strolling along the shore, smiling and happy.

"Hello!" greeted Ted, in friendly fashion.

"You shouldn't say 'hello,'" objected Janet, in a low voice.

"What should I say then?" her brother wanted to know.

"You should say 'good morning!' Just like Mother and Daddy do."

"Oh! Good morning!" and Ted said it loudly enough for several other persons on the beach to hear.

"Good morning!" responded Mr. Keller. "Well, how is every one this morning?"

"We're all well, thank you," replied Janet, as she had heard her mother say. "Are you all right? Did you sleep well?" she inquired politely, for she thought this was the right thing to say.

"To tell you the truth, I didn't sleep very well," Mrs. Keller answered. "But I shall sleep better to-night. Anyhow, it is lovely here. Let's sit down and watch the children play," she proposed to her husband.

He was willing, so they sat together on the sand, Mrs. Keller picking up the dry, white grains in her hands and letting them run through her fingers.

AT LAST THE CURLYTOPS WERE AT SUNSET BEACH, AND THEY LOVED IT VERY MUCH.

"Curlytops at Sunset Beach"

"What are you doing, Trouble?" asked Mr. Keller of William.

"Makin' a drinkin' well for a nellifunt," was the answer, and Trouble never looked up from his digging in the sand.

Mr. Keller became interested in what Ted was doing, and he helped the Curlytop boy fasten together the sticks and shingles for the sand mill.

"Do you think it will work?" asked Ted eagerly. For after he had started it he had seen that it was not so easy to make as he had thought.

"I think we can get it to work after a fashion," Mr. Keller answered. "We need some nails, though."

"I'll run home and get them," offered Ted. "Our cottage isn't far away."

"Won't you come up and see it?" invited Janet. "We thought we saw you down here last night," she went on, "and we tipped over an umbrella and hollered 'boo!' under it, but it was somebody else. It was Mr. and Mrs. Randall."

The Kellers laughed when the Curlytops told them about the mistake that had been made.

"Let's go up and see Mr. and Mrs. Martin,

my dear," suggested Mr. Keller to his wife. "Then I can get a hammer and some nails and fix Ted's sand machine."

"All right," agreed Mrs. Keller. "But perhaps your mother is busy unpacking, and doesn't want any visitors," she added to Janet.

"Oh, no, ma'am," Janet made haste to say. "Mother told me to tell you, if we saw you, to please call. She says she's going to take it easy down here and not fuss too much."

"A very wise thing to do, my dear," said Mrs. Keller. "My husband and I are on our vacation, and we intend to enjoy it. Of course, it is really his vacation," she added. "But I am helping him spend it. I do hope Mr. Narr won't come after him and make him do some work. I want my husband to have a good vacation."

"Why should Mr. Narr try to get me back to do some work?" asked Mr. Keller, with a smile.

"Well, you know he is spending his vacation somewhere around here," said Mrs. Keller. "In one way it was a mistake, I fear, to come so near him. He knows where we are. And if he needs my husband he is

sure to send for him and ask him to do something," she went on to the Curlytops. "I only hope he doesn't find him."

"So do I," murmured Mr. Keller. "But come on, let's go up to the cottage, Ted, and see if we can get your sand mill to work. All it needs now is a few nails and a bit of wire."

"I hope it will work," said Teddy.

"I guess it will, now that Mr. Keller's going to help you make it," said Janet. Evidently she had not believed Ted could do the work himself.

Mrs. Keller had been sitting on the sand near the children. Her husband arose and she stretched out her hands to him to have him help pull her to her feet. As she did so she uttered a startled cry.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Keller, in surprise.

"My wedding ring!" she gasped. "It's gone! It isn't on my finger! It must have slipped off! My wedding ring is lost in the sand!"

She was almost ready to cry, and Janet, knowing how much her mother thought of her wedding band of gold, knew how Mrs. Keller must feel.

"Well, if it's in the sand it ought to be easy to find," said Mr. Keller. "Don't walk around too much. Just stand still and look for it. When did you miss it?"

"Just a moment ago," she answered. "I was letting the sand run through my fingers, and the ring must have slipped off. Oh, if I can't find it I don't know what I shall do! I shall be heart-broken!"

The Curlytops could see tears in her eyes.

CHAPTER VIII

ANOTHER LOSS

Mr. Keller stood still near the spot where he had pulled his wife to her feet. With sharp eyes he looked all about the sand.

"What you all doin'?" asked Trouble, who had wandered off down the beach and who now came running back. "Is you all makin' a hole for a nellifunt to get a drink?"

"No, Trouble!" answered Janet.

"Don't come here, little man! Stay where you are a few minutes!" called Mr. Keller.

"What's matter?" William wanted to know, for he seemed to feel that something had happened.

"Mrs. Keller has lost her ring," explained Ted.

"And I think the best way to find it will be to look about on the sand before it is trampled down out of sight," added Mr.

Keller. He wanted to explain to the children.

"Please don't any one move," he begged, as, after another look all around where his wife had been sitting, he stepped a little to one side so that he might look behind her. "All of you keep still!"

"Is you all playin' a game?" asked Trouble, who did not seem quite to understand what had happened.

"Yes, it's a sort of game," answered Janet, for Mrs. Keller was feeling too sad to answer and her husband was busy looking about. Janet thought this was the best way of making Trouble stand still. And so it proved, for he said:

"Aw right! I stay here an' play game. Has it got a nellifunt in it?" he wanted to know.

"No, dear, no elephant," answered Mrs. Keller, with a sigh. "I should hope not," she went on. "If an elephant trampled over the sand I should never see my dear wedding ring again. Oh, I don't see how it dropped off without my noticing it at once."

"Don't worry! We'll get it back for you right away!" said her husband. "It must be lying right on top of the sand. That's

why I don't want any of you to walk around, because you might step on it," he told Janet and Ted. "I can watch where I set my feet so I won't tread on it."

He looked about carefully, casting his eyes over every inch of sand in a circle about his wife. She, too, looked as well as she could in front of her, but Mr. Keller moved all around her.

"I don't see it," he said, at last. "Suppose you three walk away from the spot, in a straight line, looking wherever you set your feet to make sure you don't step on the ring," he said.

"Do you mean us?" asked Ted.

"Yes, you and your sister."

"What about Trouble?" asked Janet.

"You go over where he is and stay by him. Then he won't trample over the spots I want to search," Mr. Keller answered.

The Curlytops walked carefully, looking at each spot of sand before putting down their feet. But they did not see the ring, though they were very anxious to find it. Mrs. Keller's face looked so sad. Tears were coming from her eyes now. And the Curlytops were sure she would be happier if her wedding ring could be found.

But though Mr. Keller looked and looked again he did not find it. His wife and the children were now away from the spot where it was supposed the gold band had been dropped in the sand. But the wedding circle was not in sight, or it would have been picked up.

"Well, I don't see it," said Mr. Keller, with a sigh. "Now I shall have to begin poking in the sand."

"Poke very carefully," urged his wife, "or you may cover it so deeply that it will never be seen."

"I'll be careful," he promised. "I'm sorry to keep you children waiting," he added; "but I'll soon be with you, Ted, and help you make that sand-mill wheel."

"Oh, I don't mind waiting," answered the Curlytop boy politely. "Don't you want me to help hunt for the ring?" he asked.

"Thank you, but I think it better that I search alone for a while," Mr. Keller replied. "While extra pairs of eyes are valuable, too many feet might do damage. I think I can pick up the ring very soon."

He knelt down on the sand, near the spot where his wife had been sitting, and, picking up handful after handful of the silvery

grains, he let them run out in a stream, hoping thus to pick up his wife's ring.

Anxiously the Curlytops watched him. Anxiously Mrs. Keller looked on, now and then wiping away a tear from her eyes. Anxiously, too, Trouble looked on. At last he murmured.

"This funny game! Is he playin' nellifunt?" he asked. For Mr. Keller, crawling around in the sand on his hands and knees, did seem to be playing some game.

"No, he isn't playing elephant," answered Ted, in a low voice. "Don't you want us to help look?" he called, more loudly.

"Perhaps it would be just as well if you did—now," Mr. Keller replied. "The ring isn't on top of the sand; that's sure. I've looked all over, carefully."

"Oh, but where can it be?" asked his wife.

"I think it must have rolled into some little hole, perhaps, and have been covered over. Or you may have pressed your hand or foot on it and thrust it into the sand. The children can help look now."

"I know how to do it," declared Janet. "You must pick up a little sand at a time.

and then put it down in another place, if you don't find the ring."

"That's the idea," Mr. Keller told the little Curlytop girl. "If you put the sand you take up back in the same place, you can't tell where it is in a few minutes, and you'll be going over the same sand twice."

"We ought to mark off this place with stones or sticks or something," suggested Ted.

"What for?" his sister wanted to know.

"So we would remember where it is," Ted answered. "Once when we came to the seashore before, I lost a rubber ball, and I couldn't find it. The coast guard told me to put some sticks up near the place I lost it, and look the next day."

"Did you find your ball?" asked Mrs. Keller, who was now stooping down, picking up handfuls of sand and letting it run through her fingers again.

"Yes, I found it," Ted answered.

"I think his idea is a good one," remarked Mr. Keller. "We may not find this ring to-day, and we may have to search to-morrow. It is hard to come back to the same place on the sand unless you mark it in some way. All sand looks alike."

"I'll get some sticks and stones," offered Ted.

"And I'll help look for the ring," offered his sister.

There were many pieces of driftwood on the beach, and also some greenish stones, worn smooth and polished by the constant washing of the waves and wet sand over them. Ted quickly made a big circle about the searchers, putting here a stick and there a stone, until the place was well marked and could be easily found again.

"It's a good thing it's above the high tide," said Mr. Keller. "If we had been sitting nearer the water the ring would be lost forever. For the tide would cover the place and might, perhaps, wash the ring out to sea."

"Oh, I wonder if I shall ever get it back!" sighed his wife.

"I think so," he answered, hopefully.

But it was a vain hope. Though Mr. and Mrs. Keller searched carefully, and the Curlytops helped, taking up and casting aside handful after handful of sand, the golden band did not show gleaming in the bright sun.

As each handful of sand was picked up,

it was tossed as far to one side as possible, without the circle of stones and sticks made by Ted. In this way the same sand would not be looked over twice.

"I'm afraid we shall have to give it up—at least, for the time being," said Mr. Keller, at last.

"Oh, do you mean I shall never find my ring?" cried his wife.

"I wouldn't say that," he replied. "It certainly is somewhere around here."

"But how can we find it?" she sighed.

"I shall have to get men with shovels, and we will sift every bit of sand within the circle Ted made," he went on. "It will take a little time, but we shall find it. I'll go back to the cottage and see about hiring some men. I'm afraid your sand-mill wheel must wait, Teddy," he went on.

"Oh, I don't mind waiting," Ted answered good-naturedly. "And I'll help you sift the sand," he offered.

"The sooner that is done the better," his wife remarked. "I never thought I should lose my wedding ring! It is terrible! I can't tell you how sad I am!"

"Never mind! Never mind," consoled her husband. "We shall find it later, I'm sure."

He arose from the sand, brushing the grains from his hands and from his trousers. Then he thrust one hand into his right trouser's pocket. As he did so, Ted noticed a queer look come over Mr. Keller's face. It was almost the same kind of look his wife had borne when she first noticed the loss of her ring.

"Oh! They're gone!" gasped Mr. Keller.

"What is?" asked his wife.

"My keys—my bunch of keys! The office keys and the keys to Mr. Narr's safe and his bank deposit box. My keys are gone!" and Mr. Keller began searching frantically in all his pockets.

"You must have dropped them while you were looking for my lost wedding ring," said Mrs. Keller.

"I think I did," her husband answered. "The keys ought to be right here on the sand."

"A bunch of keys is easier to find than a wedding ring," commented Janet.

"They ought to be in plain sight," added her brother.

But though they all eagerly scanned the surface of the sand the keys were not in

sight. They had vanished with the wedding ring. It was a great mystery.

"This is too bad!" said Mr. Keller. "If Mr. Narr finds out about this there may be trouble. I might even lose my position in his office."

"Don't say that!" begged his wife.

"But it's true," he murmured. "You don't know what a terrible man he is when he gets angry. Oh, I must find those keys—and your wedding ring! I must find them!"

"We'll help!" offered the Curlytops. They began crawling around the sand. But the second search had no more than begun before a voice was heard calling:

"Ted! Janet! Where are you?"

CHAPTER IX

OUT TO SEA

"THAT'S Mother calling!" announced Janet.

"Yes," agreed Ted, looking up from where he was delving in the sand.

"Then you children had better run home," said Mr. Keller. "Don't keep your mother waiting." He and his wife were now eagerly searching on the beach for the lost wedding ring and the bunch of keys.

"Tell your mother I will call and see her another time," said Mrs. Keller, scarcely raising her eyes from their eager look down at the sand. "I must help my husband find his keys," she added. She seemed to have forgotten about her wedding ring—at least, for a time. "If he doesn't get those keys back, and Mr. Narr finds out about their loss, there will be a sad time."

Mrs. Martin called again:

"Ted! Janet! Where are you? Is Trouble all right?"

"Yes, Mother! Here we are!" answered Ted.

"And William is with us. But there's a lot of trouble here," added Janet—she meant the trouble Mr. and Mrs. Keller were having about the wedding ring and the keys lost in the sand of Sunset Beach.

Mrs. Martin came up over the sand dunes. These were low hills, covered with coarse saw-toothed grass. There was a row of these sand hills between the sandy beach and the road that ran along the ocean front. Across the road, and back a little way from it, was the cottage Mr. Martin had hired for the summer. On another road, a little farther up from the beach, were the cottages of Mr. and Mrs. Keller and Mr. and Mrs. Randall, together with the vacation homes of many other families.

"What is going on here?" asked Mrs. Martin, with a smile, as she saw her Curlytops and William, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Keller. "Are you playing a game?" she wanted to know. For it did look odd to see so many of them delving in the sand.

"No, Mother, it isn't a game," said Janet.

"Mrs. Keller has lost her wedding ring and Mr. Keller has lost his bunch of keys," added Ted.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" exclaimed Mrs. Martin. "Let me help you look for them. Shall I call Mr. Martin? He is on the porch and——"

"I don't believe it would do any good—thank you, just the same," replied Mr. Keller. "We have been looking for some time, but I am afraid both my keys and my wife's ring are covered with sand. It is like looking for a needle in the haystack."

"Oh, but we mustn't give up searching!" murmured Mrs. Keller.

"Oh, no," agreed her husband.

The story of the lost things was quickly told to Mrs. Martin, and she began casting her eyes about, hoping she might see either the ring or the keys. But neither was found, even though the Curlytops, Trouble and Mr. and Mrs. Keller also aided.

"I shall have to do as I said I would, and get some men with shovels and sieves to look over all this sand around here," said Mr. Keller, pointing to the ring of stones and sticks made by Ted.

"It will be the only safe way," agreed Mrs. Martin.

"Don't you folks bother any more," went on Mr. Keller. "I'll go and see if I can hire some men. You stay here, my dear," he told his wife, "so we will be sure no one comes along and picks up the things."

"They would need to be very lucky to do that," remarked Mrs. Keller, with a sad smile.

"I know just how you feel," said Mrs. Martin to Mrs. Keller. "Once I lost my wedding ring, and I thought I would never find it again. But I did. It had rolled down a little hole in the corner of my room. Trouble poked it out with one of his drum sticks when he was playing. He didn't know what it was, but called me to come and see the shiny band he had found. Oh, I was so happy to get it back!"

"And I would be happy to get back my wedding ring," murmured Mrs. Keller. "But I feel worse now over my husband's lost keys. You don't know what it may mean! He may even be discharged by Mr. Narr if it is found out."

"You don't mean it!" gasped Mrs. Martin.

"Yes," was the answer. "You have no idea what a hard-hearted man Mr. Narr is. If he once found out——"

The Curlytops could not hear all that Mrs. Keller said, but they had the idea that Mr. Narr was very cruel.

"You had better go up and talk to my husband, Mr. Keller," said Mrs. Martin. "He is on the porch and he can tell you where best to hire the men to sift the sand and find the lost things. He has been here at Sunset Beach before, and knows many persons."

"Thank you, I'll do that," said Mr. Keller.

Mr. Martin came down to the shore to help look for the ring and the keys, but it was of no use. Then he and Mr. Keller went on to the village to hire some men for the work.

A little later several Italians, with shovels and sieves, were turning over the sand in the circle of sticks and stones made by Ted. Each shovelful and each sieveful was carefully examined by the men.

The Curlytops and Trouble, though wishing they could help find the lost things, did not stay on the beach much longer. There

was nothing they could do, so they went up to the cottage and were given something to eat by Norah.

"This afternoon maybe Mr. Keller will find his keys," said Janet, as she got out her doll with the shoe-button eyes. "And maybe his wife will find her ring. I hope so."

"I hope so, too," said Mrs. Martin.

"Why is Mr. Keller so worried about his keys?" asked Ted. "Would that man he works for discharge him just for losing a bunch of keys?"

"I'm afraid so, my dear," answered his mother. "Mrs. Keller told me something about this Mr. Narr. He is very rich, it seems, and owns a summer home on one of the islands in the bay. Being very rich, he thinks, I suppose, that he can have nearly everything his own way. At least he wants Mr. Keller, who works for him, to do everything just right."

"Mr. Keller wouldn't do anything wrong, would he, Mother?" asked Janet.

"Oh, no! Of course not!" Mrs. Martin replied. "But Mr. Narr might think it wrong of Mr. Keller to lose the keys. One of the keys, it seems, opens Mr. Narr's strong box in the bank. In the box, or safe

deposit vault, are valuable papers, stocks, bonds and so on. Mr. Narr may think that because Mr. Keller has lost the keys some one may find them and open the box, robbing him of his wealth."

"Could they do that?" asked Ted.

"I think not, my dear. It takes two keys to open the safe deposit box in the bank. One key is that of the man who rents the box, and the other key is kept in the bank."

"Then I don't see why Mr. Narr would make such a fuss!" exclaimed Janet.

"It is just because he is such an odd man," explained her mother. "He is very fussy. He thinks that he must have everything his own way, and he has trusted Mr. Keller with important keys. Now, if he finds out that Mr. Keller has lost those keys—even though it was not Mr. Keller's fault—Mr. Narr might be so angry that he would discharge Mr. Keller."

"Then he wouldn't have a job, would he, Mother?" asked Ted.

"Well, I think he doesn't exactly call this place a 'job,'" and Mrs. Martin smiled. "It is more of a position. It is like that of a private secretary to Mr. Narr."

"But if he lost that job—I mean position," corrected Ted, "he could get another, couldn't he?"

"Perhaps that is not as easy as it seems," Mrs. Martin answered. "Mr. Keller is quite an elderly gentleman. It would be hard for him to look for a new place—to learn new ways. Many persons will not hire an old man. Mr. Keller is not rich—he needs the money Mr. Narr pays him—and if Mr. Narr were to discharge him for losing the keys, then it would go hard with Mr. Keller."

"Then we must help him find the keys!" exclaimed Ted.

"And help Mrs. Keller find her wedding ring," added Janet.

"Yes, my dears, it would be wonderful if you could find the things lost in the sand," remarked their mother.

"I wish I could find a nellifunt!" burst out Trouble, and they all laughed at him.

"If the men don't find the things after they sift the sand we'll go look, Jan," proposed Ted.

"Yes," agreed his sister, "we'll do that."

"Of course they may find them without you," Mrs. Martin said. "But it is very kind of you to offer to look. But now, Curly-

tops, don't let this worry you too much. You came down here for a restful and happy vacation from school. And, while it is right and kind to think of the troubles of others, you are too little to be made to worry."

"Well, anyhow, we'll look for the keys and the ring if the men don't find them," said Teddy.

"Yes, you may do that," agreed his mother.

"And now let's go down to the beach and play," proposed Janet. "Let's go over by the fishing boats. I want to see them go out in the big waves."

"Oh, yes!" cried Teddy. "It's just about time for them to go out now. After we see them we can go back to the place where Mr. Keller lost his keys and see if they found them."

Sunset Beach was a fine place for fishing. All along the shore, in the bay and out in the open ocean, were nets set out in the water, a mile or often several miles from the shore. These nets are put down where the water is about forty feet deep, the nets being fastened to poles stuck in the sand.

The fish, swimming up and down the coast,

get tangled in the nets, and some of them swim into a circular part called a "purse," from which they cannot get out. Once a day, or perhaps not quite so often if there is a storm, the fishermen go out to the nets in big motor boats, lift up the "purse" and take out the fish which they bring to shore. The fish are then put in barrels, with cracked ice to keep them fresh, and are sent on trains to distant cities.

The Curlytops had been to the seashore once before, when they were quite small, and they remembered to have seen the fish boats go out and come in. Sometimes the waves were so rough that the boats would be upset and the fishermen spilled out.

Now, having come to Sunset Beach when they were older and could understand things better, Ted and Janet were eager, once more, to watch the fishing boats depart for the distant nets, some of which could just be seen from the beach.

"Come on, Trouble!" called Ted.

"We'll take good care of him, Mother," promised Janet, in answer to her mother's look.

"Where you goin'?" William wanted to know. "Are you goin' to see a nellifunt?"

"We are going to see some fish," answered Ted. For sometimes a boat laden with fish from the nets would come ashore as an empty boat went out, so both operations could be seen at the same time.

"I don't want to see fish—I want to see nellifunt!" objected Trouble, hanging back.

"Oh, come on!" urged Ted, with a laugh. "Maybe you'll see a shark, Trouble, or a horse mackerel. That's almost as good as an elephant."

"Do they have sharks in the nets?" asked Janet, eagerly.

"Oh, yes," her mother told her. "I read the other day that a large one got in the nets of some fishermen and tore the nets all to pieces. The fishermen caught the shark, however, and brought him to shore."

"I wish they'd catch one now!" exclaimed Ted.

"What's a horse mackerel?" Janet wanted to know.

"It's a very large mackerel-shaped fish," her mother answered. "It is not quite as large as a horse, but it is very big."

"As big as a shark?" asked the little girl.

"As big as some sharks," said Mrs. Martin.

" 'Nen I guess I go see a shark an' a horsie mackel," announced William. "Maybe he'll be 'most as good as a nellifunt!"

"Oh, you and your elephants!" laughed Janet.

So the children went down to the beach—that part of the beach whence the fishing boats departed. There was a crowd about the craft, waiting to see them motor off through the surf, which was rather high. In the distance the Curlytops could see where Mr. and Mrs. Keller, with the gang of Italian men, were sifting the sand, trying to find the lost ring and the keys.

"I hope they get them back," said Janet.

"So do I," agreed her brother.

The fishermen were getting ready to put the boat into the water. It was sent down the sloping beach, a few feet at a time, on wooden rollers.

When it was almost at the edge of the surf, the boat was held back from sliding in by a rope fastened to it. The other end of the rope was made fast to a big pole set in the sand, well up the beach.

Ted, Janet and Trouble wandered about

in the crowd, looking at the boat which was ready to be launched. Another boat had come in a few minutes before, and the men were busy taking out the fish. There were many kinds—some good to eat and some not. Those that were of no use were tossed away. The others were put into bushel baskets and loaded on a long two-horse truck to be taken up to the fish house. There they would be put into iced barrels.

"Oh, there's a lobster!" cried Ted, as a big one was tossed on top of a basket filled with fish.

"I want to see a shark!" announced Trouble in his shrill little voice, and the crowd laughed.

"I'll hold you up so you can see the lobster," said Janet, taking her little brother in her arms.

"No, I want to see shark!" he declared. "You didn't let me see nellifunt, an' I want to see shark."

Janet was kept so busy trying to amuse Trouble that she lost sight of Ted for a moment. She heard a shout as voices cried:

"They're going to launch the other boat! Come on!"

"Oh, Trouble, we want to see the other

boat go into the waves!" exclaimed Janet. "You've seen enough of the lobster, haven't you?"

"Yes," Trouble admitted slowly. "But I didn't see him pinch any shark. An' I like to see a nellifunt!"

Janet didn't stop to argue. She lifted Trouble down, and with him hurried over to the place where the second fishing boat was held in place, ready to be launched.

"All ready! Let her go!" shouted the captain of the fishing boat.

A man on shore loosed the rope that held the craft to the mooring post. Several fishermen, taking hold of the gunwhale, or side of the boat, pushed it along the wooden rollers down toward the surf. As the bow of the boat entered the water, the waves splashing high up and over it, the men leaped in.

In an instant the gasoline engine was started and the boat began to move out into deeper water.

"Oh, wasn't that great!" cried Janet, with excitement shining in her eyes. "Did you see that, Ted?" she called, thinking her brother must be close at hand.

But Ted did not answer—at least from

shore. However, as the crowd grew silent, Janet heard Ted's voice.

But it came from the fishing boat putting out to sea. And Ted shouted:

"Here I am, Janet! Here I am!"

Janet looked. Her ears caught the sound of her brother's voice. She saw a small figure standing up in the departing fishing boat, waving a handkerchief to her.

It was Curlytop Ted.

"Oh! Oh!" cried Janet. "Oh, Teddy!"

Well might she exclaim, for Teddy was being taken out to sea. True, it was only out as far as the fish nets. But there he was—a little boy with all those fishermen in the boat that was tossing about on the heaving billows. The sea was quite rough, and the boat might upset coming back with its load of fish! Perhaps there might be a shark in the nets!

"Oh! Oh, dear!" sighed Janet. Then she began to cry.

CHAPTER X

THE SHARK

THERE is so much that may happen at the seashore—so many accidents—that generally when grown folks see a child crying they seek a reason. The seashore in summer is supposed to be a happy place—not a place for tears. And usually one does not cry unless something has happened.

So when Janet, catching sight of Ted being carried out to sea in the fishing boat, began to sob, several ladies asked:

"What's the matter, little girl?"

"Oh, it's—now—it's Teddy!" she answered. "He—he's gone!"

"Do you mean a wave carried him out?" asked the fisherman who had cast off the rope that held the boat. "Where was he? Show me!"

He began to take off his heavy coat and

was about to sit down to pull off his rubber boots when Janet said:

"Oh, he wasn't washed out by a wave! The boat took him off! There he is in the fishing boat!"

She pointed to Teddy, who could be seen standing up in the bow of the craft, which was now far out from shore, heading toward the long, green swells of the ocean. That the taking away of the Curlytop boy in the boat had caused excitement among the fishermen in the craft was plain, for several of the men could be seen talking to Ted.

"Oh, your brother's in the boat, is he?" asked the man who had been about to take off his boots. "Well, then he's all right. I guess he asked the captain for a ride and he was taken out. Lots of boys go out to the fish nets."

"Will he—will he come—back?" faltered Janet, still sobbing.

"Of course he'll come back!" laughed the fisherman. "He'll come back when the boat comes back, and that will be in about two hours. I won't say he'll come back as clean as when he went out," he added, "for it's pretty dirty work filling a boat with slimy, flapping fish. But he may have a lot of fun."

"Will he see a lobster pinch a shark?" asked William. And every one laughed at him again. Even Janet smiled.

"Yes, he may see a lobster pinch a shark," said the fisherman. "A lobster will pinch anything that gets near his claws. And if there should be a shark in the net, and the shark should be put in the boat and there was a lobster there, the shark would get pinched."

"I wish Ted would bring me a shark an' a lobster," went on William.

"Maybe he will," chuckled the fisherman.

"Will he bring a nellifunt, too?" the little boy wanted to know.

"An elephant?" questioned the fisherman. "Well, there is such a thing as a sea elephant. It's a sort of seal with a long nose like the trunk of an elephant," he explained. "But I've never seen any in these parts. I guess, little boy, if your brother comes back with a shark and a lobster, besides a boat load of fish, he'll be doing pretty well."

"I hope the shark won't bite him," sighed Janet.

"Don't worry, little girl," said one of the women on the beach. "If the fishermen do catch a shark in their nets they'll kill it

before they lift it into the boat. It can't hurt your brother."

"I'm glad of that," Janet said.

"I don't see how the little boy got into the boat," said another woman. "My boy has been teasing to go, but the men wouldn't let him."

"I don't see how Teddy got in to go," said Janet. "My mother will be worried about him, I'm afraid."

"He'll soon be back," answered the fisherman, consolingly. "He may be back before your mother has a chance to worry. Sometimes we don't get many fish in the nets, and it doesn't take long to empty them. Now don't cry any more."

So Janet dried her tears and she and William watched the big flat wagon, loaded with fish, rumble up the sand toward the packing house. Now and then Janet gazed off to sea, where the fishing boat, containing Ted, was growing smaller and smaller the farther it went from shore. It was almost at the fish nets now.

And now, I think, it is time for us to find out how it was that Ted happened to be in the boat, and how he was taken out to sea.

As I have told you, he and Janet were

much interested in seeing the different kinds of fish brought in by the first boat. The children ran from one side to the other of the craft, as it rested on the sand, having been pulled well above the high tide limit.

Then Ted thought he would like to look into the boat that was about to go out to the nets. He wanted to see what it was like. Now, though these motor fishing-boats look rather small when they are out on the ocean, they are, really, quite large and will hold a number of men and many hundreds of fishes —even several big sharks.

While almost every one else was gathered around the boat that had been partly emptied of its load, Ted found himself alone near the craft that was about to go out and bring in what fish remained in the nets.

"I'll climb up the outside and look over the edge," said Teddy to himself.

This he did. He managed to scramble up the outside of the craft, and he looked down inside on the rubber coats of the men, the oars (to be used in case the gasolene motor failed) at the sharp pikes for killing sharks, at the bits of tarred nets and other things.

Then, all of a sudden, Ted overbalanced himself. Head first, he fell inside the boat

on a pile of nets—nets that were being taken out to be fastened to some of the poles.

"Oh!" gasped Ted. He wasn't hurt, but the breath was knocked from him, and he couldn't get up for several seconds. Then, before he knew it, there was a shout and the boat began gliding down the beach on the wooden rollers.

"All in!" cried a voice.

Crouched down inside the boat, tangled up in the mass of nets, Ted saw hands grasping the gunwhale of the craft. The men were running it down into the water and holding on to the edge so they could leap in once the boat was fully afloat.

"Hey! Let me out! I want to get out!" cried Ted, when he understood what was going to happen.

But the fishermen were shouting orders one to another, and the surf was booming on the sandy beach, so Ted's voice wasn't heard. In another moment the men had leaped over the side of the craft, the engine was started, and out to sea Ted was being taken.

Not until the boat was beyond the last line of breakers, during which passage it was tossed up and down and from side to side

in a manner most alarming to the little boy—not until after that was Ted discovered.

Then one of the fishermen looked toward the pile of nets in the bow of the craft and exclaimed:

"There's a stowaway on board!"

Ted might have been frightened except that the man laughed so hard that what had happened could not be very serious.

"A stowaway! Where?" cried the man who was steering the boat by the long tiller in the stern.

"There he is—a boy!" was the answer.

By this time Ted had freed himself of the tangle of nets and was standing up. He looked very small in the big boat and amid the big, husky fishermen, some of whom were putting on their yellow oilskin coats, for the spray was now flying over the boat.

"How did you get here?" asked one of the men.

"I—I fell in," Ted answered.

"Well, be careful you don't fall out!" grumbled a rather cross-looking fisherman.

"Don't talk that way," chided one of his mates. "Don't frighten the boy. You'll be all right, little lad," he went on, as he saw Ted's lips begin to quiver. "We'll take you

safe back to shore with us. How did you happen to fall in?"

Then Ted related how he was climbing up the outside of the boat as it waited on the beach to be released.

"No harm done," said Lars Oleson, who was the captain of the boat. "You'll get a bit dirty when we fill up the boat—that is, if we get enough fish to do so—but you won't be in any danger. Stow him up in the bow, some of you. on a pile of nets. It's getting rough."

Indeed, the wind was blowing harder now, whipping spray from the crests of the waves and sending it in a shower over the boat. However, it was July and the day was warm.

Ted was lifted up farther toward the bow, or front end of the boat, which was higher than amidships, or the middle. Under the protection of the high bow, Ted sat down on a pile of nets. He rather liked the tarry smell, but he was afraid some of the tar would come off on his clothes. And he was right—it did.

"But it's my old suit," he thought. Mrs. Martin had been wise in making the children don old garments to play down on the sand.

Now the spray from the waves did not

reach Ted, though the men were showered with it. But they did not seem to mind. It was part of their business. Then, too, they wore heavy oilskin coats which kept them dry.

After the first shock of his fall and his fright, Teddy's heart did not beat so hard. He was rather glad, after all, that it had happened this way.

"But I guess Janet will be scared," he told himself. "And I wonder what Mother and Daddy will say?"

There was one consolation, though, he would soon be back on the beach again. He heard the fisherman say that. They talked of the number of fish the other boat had brought in. This would not leave many for them, and they would be through that much more quickly.

Now that he was in a sheltered place, Teddy began to feel better. On, on to sea, toward the line of nets, rode the craft.

The sea was a bit rough, and the boat moved up and down on the long swells, like the pendulum of a slowly ticking clock, but in the opposite direction.

"This is fun!" thought Teddy to himself. He was glad he did not feel seasick, as many

persons might have felt with that slow, heaving motion. Ted was a pretty good little sailor.

"Here, boy—what's your name—you'd better wrap this around you," said one of the fishermen, handing Ted a piece of an old yellow oilskin coat. "It will keep you dry, and you won't get so dirty from the fish. We have to dump them in anyhow at first, and they flop all over the seats and everywhere."

"Thank you," responded Teddy politely. "My name is Ted Martin, and my nickname is Curlytop."

"That's a good name," said the fisherman, with a laugh. "My name is Sven Jensen, and my nickname is Hungry Sven," and he laughed again, his companions joining in.

Ted also laughed, and was beginning to feel more jolly. It was a great adventure to be thus taken out in a fishing boat. He knew his mother would not worry for long, and Ted thought that some of the people on shore would take care of Janet and Trouble.

So he wrapped about him the torn piece of the oilskin coat. It was used, at times, to put over the motor when there was a heavy rain. It was not very clean—this oil-

skin—but it would keep some of the fish slime off Ted's clothes.

"Well, here we are!" shouted Captain Oleson. "Now to see what we have in the nets!"

The motor boat began to slow down. It was entering into what seemed to Ted to be a tangle of nets suspended on poles going deep down into the water. But to the fishermen what seemed a tangle was nothing of the sort.

"Hi! Look there! A big one!" suddenly shouted the Swede who had said his nickname was "Hungry Sven."

"A shark! A shark!" shouted the others, and Ted felt a thrill go through him.

"A shark, eh?" muttered Captain Oleson. "I'll shark him! Give me that lance!"

A pole with a sharp iron point on the end was handed him. Then, all of a sudden, something seemed to hit the boat, which tipped to one side.

"Look out! He's ramming us!" cried one of the men.

"Hold hard!" shouted the captain.

Ted was almost knocked down by the impact of the shark against the side of the

boat. For the big "tiger of the sea" had bumped against the craft.

"Look out for the boy! Watch the boy! Don't let him go overboard!" shouted Captain Oleson. "Let me get at the shark!"

He climbed over the seats to a place in the middle of the boat. Ted had sunk back on the pile of nets, but he wanted to see the shark caught, so he stood up again.

"Come here, lad, if you want a look," invited Hungry Sven. He held out a rough hand to Ted, who, grasping it, made his way out of the bow.

"He's gone!" cried one of the men, in disappointed tones.

"No, here he comes at us again! Look out!" cried the captain.

There was a crash against the side of the boat, and Ted felt himself being tumbled about.

CHAPTER XI

LOBSTER POTS

WELL might the little Curlytop boy have felt afraid—small chap that he was—out on the ocean in an open boat with a big shark bumping its shovel-nose against the craft. But, somehow or other, Ted was not at all afraid. Perhaps he knew the sturdy fishermen were more than a match for the big fish tangled in the net.

"Look out there, my boy!" cried one of the boatmen, as he saw Ted tumble down on the pile of nets as the boat heeled over. "Don't fall out!"

"No, I won't," answered Janet's brother, as he scrambled to his feet. He wanted to lean over the edge of the boat and see the men catch the shark. But the same fisherman called out:

"Be careful! Don't lean over the gunwale!"

Ted kept back at that warning. Then he saw Captain Oleson catch up a long, sharp harpoon, fastened to a stout rope. This harpoon the captain threw into the shark. The big fish struggled, he bumped the boat again with his head, he lashed out with his tail, splashing water over every one in the boat, including Ted. But the piece of oilskin on the boy kept him pretty dry.

"That's the last of him! Haul him in and we'll let the folks on shore see him!" ordered the captain, as the shark was killed. He was hauled over the side of the boat—no very easy work—but at last the big, ugly fish lay on the bottom. It was a shark about ten feet long, and as Ted looked at the cruel teeth and the long nose, like a shovel sticking out in front, the Curlytop boy was glad he had not fallen into the water while the shark was about.

"Well, we settled him, but I think he has torn our nets and let out a lot of fish we might have had," said the captain, as he looked at the dead shark in the boat.

This proved to be true. When the fishermen hauled up their net there was a big hole torn in it by the shark, who had been entangled in it and had tried to get out.

Through this hole many fish had escaped. But still there was a goodly load which half-filled the boat.

The fish were dipped out of the drawn purse net by smaller scoop, or dip, nets, and dumped, flapping and leaping, into the bottom of the boat on top of the shark.

Then, indeed, Ted was glad of the oilskin he had wrapped about him. For some of the fish flapped on him, slapping him with their tails, covering him with salt water and spray. There were some big bluefish in the catch, at the sight of which the eyes of the captain gleamed.

"I'll get a good price for those," he said. "Bluefish are scarce. Haven't had any in a dog's age. The bluefish must have been so frightened at the shark that they didn't dare run away."

There were also sea bass in the net, and many queer fish that seemed to have two wings.

"What are those?" asked Ted, when the net was emptied and the boat started for shore.

"Sea robins," answered one of the men.

"They're not the kind of robins that sing, either," added another, and he began toss-

ing overboard the sea robins, which are of no use as food.

Ted felt quite proud of himself as the boat rode through the surf and up on the beach. Other men from the fishery were waiting for it, and as soon as it was near enough a big hook was put in a loop of rope in the bow of the boat, and a team of horses hauled the craft well up on the sand, out of reach of the high tide waves.

Ted almost wished there might have been more danger as the boat came through the surf. Sometimes the fishing boats upset, he had heard. But though the sea was rough Captain Oleson skillfully steered his craft in and hardly any water came aboard.

Janet and Trouble were waiting for Teddy, and as soon as Janet saw her brother in the boat she called out:

"Are you all right? Oh, I was so scared!"

"Pooh! There wasn't anything to get scared about!" laughed Ted, as one of the men helped him down and out of the craft. "We got a big shark, too!" the Curlytop boy added, as he dropped down on the sand.

"Have you?" exclaimed Janet. "I want to see it!"

"Oh, they caught a shark! They caught

a shark!" murmured many voices in the crowd drawn up on Sunset Beach to await the arrival of the fish boat. Men, women and children crowded about the craft, anxious for a sight of one of the monsters of the deep.

When the good fish had been taken out and sent to the icing place, the shark was dumped out on the sand. The crowd gathered close about it, and some venturesome boys even opened the mouth of the shark, to look at his rows of sharp teeth.

"How did you catch him, Teddy?" asked Janet.

"Well, course I didn't catch him," Teddy modestly answered. "But I saw the captain harpoon him," and the Curlytop boy told of the capture of the big fish, while other boys and girls listened.

Then, when the other fish had been taken care of, the shark was put on the wagon and shipped to New York, for Captain Oleson had an order for a shark from a firm of leather manufacturers who made the thick skin of the big fish into pocketbooks.

Just as the crowd was moving away, down to the beach came Mr. Martin. He looked

worried, but this passed away when he saw the Curlytops and Trouble.

"I've been wondering where you children were," he said. "Your mother was getting anxious about you."

"I've been off to the fish nets in the boat and I saw 'em catch a shark!" exclaimed Ted, not wanting his sister to get ahead of him in telling the news.

"You did what?" cried Mr. Martin, hardly able to believe what he heard.

"Yes, he was out in the fish boat," added Janet.

"And the shark—he has a nose like a nellifunt, only it isn't so long," chimed in Trouble.

Then Mr. Martin had to laugh, though he looked a bit serious when Ted told about having fallen into the boat and being taken out to sea.

"Of course it wasn't your fault, little Curlytop," said his father. "But you must be more careful when playing about the beach, the ocean and the boats. The sea is deep and wide—it isn't like the brook at home. So be careful, all of you."

The children promised that they would,

and when Mr. Martin saw how dirty Ted was, from the fish, he said to his son:

"You'd better go up to the cottage and get cleaned."

"I will," Ted answered. "Did they find Mr. Keller's keys, and the wedding ring?" he asked.

"No," replied his father. "I'm afraid they're lost for good. They searched all around in the sand, but didn't find them."

Several days passed, and each day brought more fun to the Curlytops and Trouble. They spent long, sunny days on the beach or in the water, splashing about in shallow pools left by the tide as it went out.

Every day Mr. or Mrs. Keller walked down to the place where the keys and the wedding ring had been lost in the sand, hoping to find them.

"But I'm afraid we shall never see them again," sighed Mrs. Keller.

"I only hope Mr. Narr doesn't ask me about his keys," said Mr. Keller. "I may be able to get another set from the bank and, if I can, everything will be all right. But if I don't—" He did not finish what he started to say, but he looked worried.

"We'll help you hunt for them," offered Ted.

"It's very good of you," answered Mr. Keller, shaking his head. "But I fear it is of little use."

However, the Curlytops did not give up. Whenever they had nothing else to do—which was not very often, to be sure—they would wander down to the beach near the spot where the ring and the keys had been lost. They could tell the spot now, for Mr. Keller had planted an old post in the sand—a post that had once been part of a ship's mast.

But though they delved about, the children found nothing more valuable than shells and stones, with now and then a bit of white coral that had been washed up by the waves.

One day, after the Curlytops and Trouble had been bathing in the morning, Ted called to Janet after lunch and said:

"Let's go down near the lighthouse and look inside."

"Will they let us?" his sister wanted to know.

"Sure, they will," Teddy answered. "Captain Oleson told me they would. Come on."

There was a lighthouse on the point of land that separated the bay from the open ocean. The Martins' cottage was on the bay and faced the setting sun (that was why the place was called Sunset Beach) but was very near the ocean, too. The lighthouse was a square tower of stone, and in the top, at night, a flashing light burned, to warn ships, out at sea, not to come too near shore, because of a dangerous sand bar.

The lighthouse was not so far from the Martin cottage that Mrs. Martin could not let the children go alone. They would be safe on the beach, she felt sure.

So then, a little later, Ted, Janet and Trouble might have been seen wending their way down the sand. It was a pleasant day, the sun was shining and the waves were sparkling. The sea was quite calm, only low rollers breaking on the beach.

A short distance from the lighthouse, the Curlytops came upon a number of queer, black objects on the beach. They were of wood, and seemed to be made of laths nailed on some half-round pieces of wood, with bits of fish net inside.

"What are they?" asked Janet.

"Lobster pots," answered her brother. "I

guess the man that owns them put them out here on shore to mend them."

"What are lobster pots?" Janet wanted to know, while she stopped to look at them. Trouble pulled his hand out of his sister's and began tossing pebbles into the waves.

"Lobster pots are pots to catch lobsters in," said Teddy. "They take 'em out to sea with a brick inside, and when lobsters get in the men take 'em out."

"What do they put a brick in for?" asked Janet. "Does a lobster like to eat a brick?"

"Course not!" laughed Ted. "They put some pieces of fish in for the lobster to eat, and the brick makes the wooden pot heavy so it sinks down on the bottom of the ocean. Then the lobster crawls in to get the fish bait, and it can't crawl out again."

"Why can't it, and how do you know?" asked Janet.

"I know 'cause Captain Oleson told me," answered Teddy. "And the lobster can't get out 'cause he gets tangled in the piece of fish net. A lobster has to crawl backward in the ocean. He can't go frontwards 'cause his big claws are in the way. He crawls backward into the little hole in the piece of fish net in the pot, and when he wants to

crawl out again he can't do it. He can't find the hole 'cause he has to go backward all the while."

"I should think," said Janet, "that if he could find the hole to crawl in backward, he could find the hole to crawl out backward."

"He can't," explained Ted, " 'cause, Captain Oleson says, the hole where he goes in is big, like the big end of a funnel. But when he gets inside the hole is little, like the little end of a funnel, and he can't find it."

"Oh, I see what you mean!" exclaimed Janet, as she looked inside one of the several lobster pots scattered on the beach.

Lobster pots are tied together with a long rope, and, as Teddy explained, they are sunk to the bottom of the ocean by means of bricks inside them. The two ends of the ropes to which the pots are fastened are buoyed up by big pieces of cork, or are tied to poles, and on top of the poles the fisherman places red flags so he can find his pots when he comes to empty them. Sometimes a storm will break the mooring ropes and the pots will drift ashore.

The Curlytops were not certain whether these pots had drifted ashore or had been brought there purposely. At any rate, there

were a number of the pots, which were black because they were covered with tar, which keeps them from rotting in the salty water of the ocean.

"I wonder if there's any lobsters in them now?" ventured Janet.

"No, I don't guess so," answered Ted.

"Look, Trouble," went on Janet, calling her small brother. "This is how a lobster goes into a pot."

Janet had with her a rag doll, and she now thrust this treasure into the large funnel-like opening of one of the lobster pots. Close up to the round hole in the fish net part of the trap the little girl thrust her doll.

Suddenly she gave a startled cry.

"What's the matter?" called Ted, turning back, for he had walked on.

"Something in one of the pots grabbed my doll away from me!" answered Janet. "I guess a lobster took my rag doll, Teddy!"

CHAPTER XII

WHERE IS TROUBLE?

TEDDY MARTIN came racing back up the sandy beach in answer to his sister's cry.

"What's the matter?" asked the Curlytop boy. He had been watching a distant fish hawk diving for a fish, and Ted was anxious to see if the bird got something for his dinner and for the little, whistling fish hawks in the nest back in the dead tree. "What happened, Janet?" he inquired.

"Something in the pot took my rag doll! They took it right out of my hands—pulled it away," explained Janet. "I guess it was a lobster, Teddy."

"Maybe it was a nellifunt," murmured Trouble. "I mean a little, baby nellifunt," he went on, as he looked at the small size of the lobster pots and thought how large an elephant was.

"It couldn't be a lobster," declared Teddy.

"Why not?" Janet wanted to know.

"'Cause there aren't any lobsters in those pots," answered her brother. "They take the lobsters out before they bring the pots to shore."

"Maybe they forgot this lobster," suggested the little Curlytop girl. "Anyhow, something in the pot took my doll away."

"How?" Teddy wanted to know, for he had been so busy watching the fish hawk that he had not seen what Janet had done.

"I was showing William how the lobsters went into the traps," Janet explained, "and I made believe my rag doll was a crawling lobster and I stuck her in the net hole. Then she went all the way in, 'cause something took hold of her and pulled her."

"It couldn't be a lobster!" cried Teddy.

"Well, you just look!" challenged Janet.

She pointed to the black, wooden pot of laths—the one she had thrust her rag doll into. This pot was partly under one or two others, so that the inside could not be seen clearly. But, having heard his sister's story, Teddy began lifting off the covering pots so

he could get at the one to which Janet pointed, Janet falling to, to help him.

When this had been done the three children clearly saw, through the cracks between the laths, something moving about inside the pot.

"Oh, it's my doll!" exclaimed Janet.

"She's movin' like she was alive," said Trouble.

"You're right! A lobster has her!" cried Teddy. "A lobster must have been left in one of the pots when they came ashore or when they were left here. And when you stuck the doll in, the lobster thought it was something good to eat, I guess, and grabbed it."

"Yes, that's how it was," Janet agreed. "But, Teddy," she demanded, "how am I going to get my doll again? I want her back."

"It's only a rag doll!" scoffed Teddy.

"I don't care if she is only a rag doll," and now Janet began to cry, "I want her back! I want my rag doll!"

"Oh, I'll get her for you!" said Teddy. "I'll get her."

"How can you?" his sister wanted to know.

"THERE YOU ARE!" TEDDY CRIED, AS HE SAFELY GOT THE DOLL OUT.

"There's a little door in the top of the lobster pot," explained Teddy. "Captain Oleson showed me about it. The fishermen open this door to lift out the lobsters, 'cause they can't pull 'em through the hole in the fish net. Here, I'll show you!"

He pointed to the top of the pot. Some of the laths were made into the shape of a little trap door, on hinges, with a wooden button to hold it shut. Ted turned this button, and then he and his sister and brother could look down into the pot at the lobster's back.

There was the big creature, with its big claws—a sort of dark greenish creature in color, though it would turn a bright red when boiled. And in its claws, or, at least, near them, was Janet's rag doll.

"Oh! Oh! Look at him!" murmured Trouble, bending close to the pot.

"Look out he doesn't pinch your nose!" warned Ted.

"How you going to get my doll out so he doesn't pinch you?" Janet wanted to know. For she saw that one could easily reach a hand into the lobster pot through the trap door in the top.

"I'll do it!" declared Teddy. "Here, Jan,

you take this stick and poke him. He'll reach out his claws to grab the stick and he won't see me when I grab for the doll. You tease him with the stick."

"All right, but you be careful!" said Janet. "I like my rag doll, but I don't want you to get pinched, Teddy."

"I'll be careful," said her brother. "He isn't a very lively lobster."

This was true. A lobster, being rather big and clumsy, is not as quick with his claws as is a crab. When first taken from the water lobsters can lift their claws well up over their head and pinch very hard. But they can not do it as quickly as a crab can. And when lobsters have been out of water for some time they get slow and sluggish, and seem hardly able to lift their claws which, often, are half as large as themselves. Of course, when a lobster does pinch, he pinches much harder than a crab. And old, big lobsters have teeth on their claws so they can crush even a clam or an oyster shell, I should imagine.

But, as Teddy said, this lobster was slow. He could reach his claws out straight in front of him, and pull or pinch with them, but he could not raise them above his head.

Now Janet did as Teddy told her, and teased the creature with a stick Teddy handed her.

The lobster moved about his long feelers, one on either side of his head near his eyes. He slowly reached out his biggest claw and took hold of the stick.

"Oh, he's pinching it!" cried Trouble.

"Go ahead, Teddy! Get the doll now!" yelled Janet.

Her brother quickly reached his hand inside the lobster pot and lifted out the "bundle of rags," as he called it, but which Janet called Nancy Lou, her doll.

"There you are!" Teddy cried, as he safely got the doll out. "Now he can pinch as much as he likes!"

The children remained near the lobster pots for some little time longer, watching the creature slowly move about inside. It seemed to be the only one caught, the others having been taken out. This one must have been forgotten, Teddy thought.

"He's funny," remarked Trouble, as he poked another stick in through the cracks of the pot, and saw the lobster grab it. "He's funny, an' I likes him!"

"Well, I'm glad you've found something else to like besides an elephant," laughed

Janet, as she wiped some sand off her rag doll's dress.

"Oh, I like nellifunts, too," declared William. He was true to his first love, you see.

"Well, come on to the lighthouse," suggested Teddy, and so the children went on down the beach.

The lighthouse was in rather a lonesome place, and visitors seldom went there. The lighthouse keeper was always glad of company, for his was a solitary life, and he was glad to see the children.

"Come in!" he invited them. "Come in and have some lemonade!"

"Does lemonade grow in lighthouses?" asked Trouble.

"Well, some is growing here, or springing up, whatever you like to call it, because my wife just made it," explained the keeper, with a laugh. "It's a hot day, and I've just finished cleaning the light, so she made me some. But there's more than I need, and I want you to have some of it."

The Curlytops and Trouble were very willing, you may be sure, to drink some of the cool, sweet lemonade, as the day was a

hot one and they were warm from their walk down the sandy beach.

Mrs. Dent, the keeper's jolly wife, gave the children some crackers to nibble with their lemonade, and they had quite a little party there in the lighthouse.

"Could we see the light?" asked Teddy, for he was interested in such things.

"Of course you can," answered Mr. Dent.

"What does you want a light for in the daytime?" asked Trouble.

"We don't, little man," answered Mr. Dent, with a laugh. "The light is lighted only at night, so the sailors, far out at sea, can tell by its flash where they are. But during the day I must clean the lamp and polish the glass so it will be clear and bright. Come, I'll show you."

The Curlytops and Trouble mounted up a little winding stair in the tower of the lighthouse until they reached the upper room. This was completely of glass—glass all around it, but not ordinary window glass. The glass of the lighthouse tower was specially made lenses, so arranged as to send straight beams of light for many miles out to sea.

In the middle of the tower room, on a big

iron stand, stood a great lantern—a lantern that held many quarts of oil. It was the largest lamp the children had ever seen.

"I wouldn't want to clean that lamp chimney!" said Janet, as she looked at it. "I don't believe I could even lift it."

"No, I don't believe you could," said Mr. Dent. "And if you should drop it and break it, that would be very sad."

"Look at the big wicks!" exclaimed Ted, pointing to them.

"Yes, and they must be trimmed several times during the night to make sure the light is always bright," said the keeper. "It would not do to have the light grow dim or go out."

"Are all lighthouses like this?" Janet wanted to know.

"No," answered Mr. Dent. "In some the lamp is an electric one, and in others it burns gas. This is an old-fashioned light, and has been here many years. There is some talk of taking it away and putting a new electric light in its place. When they do, I suppose I shall lose my job," he added, with a short laugh.

"That's what Mr. Keller is afraid of," remarked Janet.

"Who is Mr. Keller, and why is he afraid of losing his place?" asked Mr. Dent.

"It's 'cause he lost Mr. Narr's keys," explained Ted, telling the story.

"Hum," remarked Mr. Dent. "Lost in the sand, eh? Well, it's pretty hard to find anything once it gets in the sand. You might pick it up right away quick, and, again, it might be years before you saw it again, and then it would only be by accident."

"We'll look again when we go back," said Janet to her brother.

"Yes," he agreed. "And I hope we'll find the ring and the keys."

Mr. Dent showed the children all about the lighthouse, and even turned on the machinery that revolved the light. It was this turning of the light that made it flash.

There were several kinds of lights in the beacons along the coast, the keeper explained. Some were fixed white or red lights, and some were revolving or flashing red or white lights. In these last there was an arrangement so the sailor saw first a flash of light, and then a patch of darkness would come.

"Every lighthouse has a different number

of flashes," explained Mr. Dent, "and the sailors, by counting them, can tell which house it is. Then they know on what part of the coast they are."

"What makes the machinery go and turn the light?" asked Ted.

"A big weight, like the weights in a grandfather's clock," said the keeper. "Each day I must wind up this weight to the top of the tower. Then it goes down slowly, turning a shaft, or axle, and by means of cog wheels the light is revolved."

"Could we come some time at night and see it work?" asked Ted, eagerly.

"Oh, yes, come any time you wish," replied the good-natured Mr. Dent.

Down the winding tower stairs went the Curlytops and Trouble. As they entered the living room (for the keeper and his wife lived in the lighthouse) Mrs. Dent called out:

"What about some more crackers and lemonade, children? It must be a hot climb up in the tower on a day like this."

"It was," said her husband. "I'm ready for more lemonade."

So more refreshments were served, and

as Trouble sipped his drink and nibbled his cracker he said:

"This is lots of fun! It's 'most as much fun as a circus!"

"Is it, little man? I'm glad of that!" laughed Mrs. Dent.

There were many sea curiosities in the keeper's home, and the children looked at them until Ted and Janet decided it must be time to go back to their cottage.

"Maybe we'll have time to take another look for Mr. Keller's keys," suggested Teddy.

"I hope we find them," added his sister.

They started away from the lighthouse, the Curlytops did, but, suddenly, Janet turned and exclaimed:

"Where is Trouble?"

"I thought he was with you," said Ted.

"And I thought he was with you," said Janet. "I guess he must have run back to listen to that big sea shell. I'll get him."

She hurried back into the lighthouse while Ted waited.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SEA PUSS

MRS. DENT looked up as Janet again entered the living room of the lighthouse apartment, where the keeper and his wife had dwelt for many years.

"What is it, my dear?" asked Mrs. Dent. "Did you forget something? Or do you want a little more lemonade?"

"No, thank you," Janet answered. "But I came back to get my little brother."

"Your little brother—the one who has such a funny name, Trouble? Do you mean him?"

"Yes'm. Is he here?" asked Janet, looking around the room. "I thought maybe he might have come back to listen to that big sea shell. He likes to hear it roar."

On the floor, near the mantle in Mrs. Dent's room, was a big shell, pearly pink inside. By holding this to the ear a faint

roaring sound could be heard. Some people imagine this is the distant roar of the sea, which remains inside the shell, no matter how far it may be taken from the ocean. But the same roaring sound may be heard if you hold a kitchen bowl over your ear, so, really, the shell has nothing to do with it. The roar is caused by other sounds—sounds that may be all around you, and the ocean has nothing to do with it.

However, Trouble had an idea that the shell roared like the waves on Sunset Beach, and he had spent most of his time while in the lighthouse holding the shell to his ear. When Ted and Janet missed him they imagined he had slipped back to play again with the shell.

"No, Trouble isn't here. He didn't come back," Mrs. Dent said. "At least, I didn't see him. Of course he may have slipped in, and have gone into the tower where my husband is. I'll ask him."

But Mr. Dent had not seen the little fellow, and a hasty search made it certain that he had not come back to his new friends. Janet began to look worried. She went to the door and saw Ted waiting for her. While Ted waited he was making a

hole in the sand. But he could not have been looking for the lost keys and ring, for they had been dropped at a different spot on the beach—a place not far from the Martin cottage.

"Trouble isn't here, Ted!" called Janet.

"He isn't?" There was a note of alarm in Ted's voice.

"Did you see him after I came in here?" Janet went on.

"No, he isn't out here."

Ted stopped his play in the sand and walked toward his sister. Mrs. Dent and her husband came out to join them.

"This is rather strange," remarked the lighthouse keeper's wife. "Does your little brother often run away like this?"

"Yes, lots of times," answered Ted. "He's always doing something!"

"I hope nothing has happened," murmured Mrs. Dent. And, almost without knowing what she was doing, her eyes wandered toward the sea. The ocean was not very rough, but it would not need a very great wave to wash away a little boy like Trouble.

"We'll soon find him!" called Mr. Dent,

in a cheerful voice. "When did you Curly-tops last see him?"

"He was with me just a little while ago," Janet answered. "I was looking at some shells on the beach, and when I picked them up and was calling to Trouble to come along, he wasn't there."

"He just wandered away—that's all," said the lighthouse keeper. "We'll find him. He may be behind some of the sand dunes. Let's look!"

All along the beach were rows of little hills or hummocks of sand, on which grew weeds and coarse sedge grass. It would have been easy for a little fellow to have wandered away amid these hills, with their green growth, and be lost for a time.

Ted, Janet, and Mr. and Mrs. Dent scurried about, searching behind one sand dune after another, but no little Trouble boy could they find. Then Mr. Dent began to look anxious.

"He couldn't have gotten very far away," he said. "There wasn't time enough after Janet missed him. He must be around here somewhere. Do you think he is hiding on purpose to scare you?" he asked the Curly-tops.

"No, I don't believe he'd do that," Ted answered.

Janet was walking toward a pile of dried seaweed on the beach. It had been raked into a pile by the lighthouse keeper, who intended to burn it later.

Suddenly Janet began to run toward the pile of weed. The next moment she was rapidly pulling it apart, scattering it all over the beach, and she cried:

"I've found him! Here he is!"

The next moment she was hurrying toward Ted and the others, leading the little fellow by the hand. William was sleepily rubbing his eyes with his chubby fists.

"He was asleep under the seaweed," Janet explained. "Oh, Trouble, why did you hide there and scare us all so?" she asked.

"I—I was—now I was tired, an' I made believe I was a nellifunt an' I went to sleep on my pile of hay," explained Trouble.

And that was what he had done. Wandering away from Janet, the little fellow had seen the pile of seaweed. It was soft and clean, and had the good smell of the salty ocean. Trouble just burrowed into it as a little dog might have done, and pulled the

weed over him so that he was almost completely hidden.

"I thought maybe he had gone off home by himself," remarked Ted.

"And I thought maybe a big wave had carried him off," said Mrs. Dent. "I thought he had been caught by the sea puss."

"What's the sea puss?" asked Janet.

"It's what folks around here call the undertow," explained Mr. Dent. "Did you ever stand in the edge of the surf, and feel the top of the waves running up the beach, and then some water, lower down, running back into the sea?"

"Yes," answered Ted. "It makes a funny pull on your legs."

"Well, that funny pull is the undertow, or sea puss," explained the lighthouse keeper. "It is a current of water running beneath the top of the waves to get back into the ocean. Sometimes it is very strong, and carries even powerful swimmers out to sea. Often there is a strong sea puss when there are only small waves. You Curlytops want to be careful. And if you find there is a strong sea puss, or undertow, don't stay in bathing."

"We won't," promised Janet. "I'm glad Trouble wasn't caught in the sea puss."

"I rather be caught by a nellifunt," murmured William.

Mr. and Mrs. Dent laughed, and then, telling Ted and Janet to keep careful watch over their little brother, the lighthouse keeper and his wife went back to the beacon while the Curlytops started down the beach for the cottage.

They told of their adventures, and Mrs. Martin warned Trouble not to go away again and hide as he had done.

One happy day after another followed at Sunset Beach. There was one grand succession of good times for Teddy, Janet and William. One day they would go in bathing, and after their dip in the waves, or their several dips, if the day was hot, they would play about on the beach or in the shade of a big umbrella. They often saw Mr. and Mrs. Randall on the sands, and also Mr. and Mrs. Keller.

"Have you found your ring yet?" Janet asked the dear old lady more than once.

"No, my dear," would be the sad reply. "I'm afraid I never shall."

"I've been looking for your keys, but I haven't found them," Ted would add to Mr. Keller.

Some afternoons, when the morning had been spent by the children in bathing or on the beach, their mother would take them to Oceanside City, where there were many amusements, such as merry-go-rounds, shoot the chutes, and other forms of fun. Trouble and the Curlytops liked this.

More than once Ted and Janet spent a half hour or so looking over and digging in the sand where the keys and ring had been lost, but they did not find them.

One day Ted and Janet went down to the beach alone to bathe. Trouble was not feeling well, and his mother remained at home with him. But she knew it would be safe for the Curlytops to go to the bathing beach, as many other persons were there, and life guards were on duty to see that no one would be drowned.

Ted and Janet went in for a "dip," as they called it, and then came out to sit on the sand in the sun and get warm. They intended to go in again before going back to the cottage.

They happened to sit down near a very

fancifully dressed lady who had a book, a dog and a big sun umbrella. She was sitting under the sun umbrella, reading the book, and the dog must have been rather lonesome. His proud mistress paid little attention to him.

"Look at the nice dog," remarked Ted, in a low voice, to his sister.

"Yes, he's lovely," Janet said. "I wish we had him."

The dog must have heard the friendly voices of the children, for he wagged his tail. Then he looked at the lady. She had her eyes on the book and did not notice him. The dog thought it was a good chance to run away and have fun with somebody who loved dogs.

So over he ran to Ted and Janet and soon he was having a grand time with them, running after and bringing back sticks they threw for him, scrambling about, climbing all over them and covering them with sand.

At last the lady became aware that her dog had strayed away. She looked up and cried in a severe voice:

"Toto, come here this instant!"

The little dog dropped his tail between

his legs, looked very much ashamed, and crept back to his proud and haughty mistress.

"Come on! Let's go back in the water and get washed off!" called Ted to his sister, for the dog had spattered them all over with sand.

"All right," Janet answered. "I'll be in first!" she shouted, as she raced for the edge of the surf.

"You will not! I'll beat!" cried Ted.

He leaped to his feet, but one foot slipped on a round stick—one of the sticks he had been tossing for Toto to race after. Down fell the little Curlytop boy in a heap on the sand, almost as soon as he had risen.

"Oh, ho! You will not beat! You will not beat!" laughed Janet, as she raced off ahead of him.

She had seen that Teddy was not hurt, or she would not have laughed. Ted himself had to chuckle, but a moment later he got up and was off at top speed for the line of breakers.

However, Janet had gotten too much of a start for Teddy to overtake her, and she was first in the water.

The children were so eager about the

little race that they did not see the life guards ordering swimmers from the water. And the guard who floated about in the boat, some distance from the breakers, was bringing in several young men who had ventured out too far.

As Ted and Janet splashed in the waves there was a cry of alarm, and one of the guards shouted:

"Come back! Come back! Don't go out now! It's dangerous!"

Janet, however, was pretty well out. She had hold of the life ropes, and Ted was about to follow her when, suddenly, Janet's hands were torn from the cable and she went down beneath the white, foaming crests. But before her head went under she screamed:

"Oh, the sea puss has me! The sea puss has me!"

CHAPTER XIV

A SAND TUNNEL

LIFE guards at the sea beaches are trained to act quickly in times of danger. Perched on their high bench, and ready with life lines, they are always on the alert to pull from the waves those who are likely to drown.

So it was that one of the guards saw Janet knocked down by a wave and saw her tumbling about in the surf. He knew there was a strong undertow, or sea puss, running. That is why the bathers had been ordered from the water. The tide had turned, and the sea puss became very strong after Ted and Janet left the water to play with the little dog.

"One side! I'll get her out!" shouted the life guard, a jolly, red-haired, strong swimmer, Jerry Condon by name. "One side!" he yelled, as he leaped from his perch on

the high bench and dashed down the sand and into the water.

So rapidly did the guard rush down that he had to push aside Ted, who was about to go into the water to splash about with Janet. Teddy was knocked down on the sand, and to one side. He was not hurt, though he was much surprised. The little Curlytop boy did not know about the sea puss until his sister called to him.

So quickly did Jerry Condon act that, almost before Janet had a chance to swallow any water and choke, the guard had her in his arms and was running up the beach with her.

An excited crowd gathered around, as always happens when a swimmer or bather is pulled from the surf, and Teddy joined them, not knowing just how it had all happened, so quickly did it take place.

"Janet! Janet! Are you all right?" he called.

"Yes, she's all right," answered another of the life guards. So quickly had the guard acted that Janet was little the worse from the accident, except that she was much frightened.

She had felt the strange and terrible grip

of the undertow, or sea puss, on her legs and feet almost as soon as she entered the surf. She did not intend to go very far out, and she grasped the rope, as her mother had told her to do. But no sooner were her hands on it than it was torn from her grasp by the power of the under-sweeping current, running down the sloping hill of the sandy beach. Then Janet had screamed and the guard had come to her rescue.

"Are you all right now, my dear?" asked a lady in the crowd. She was holding Janet in her arms.

"Yes, ma'am, I'm all right, I guess," Janet answered in a choking voice, for the salt water seemed to stick in her throat. "Is Teddy all right?" she wanted to know.

"Yes, Jan, I'm here," he answered, and the crowd, hearing his voice, opened that he might pass the circle of curious ones and get to his sister.

"I'm glad you didn't get in the sea puss," said Janet, as she struggled to her feet. "It was terrible!"

"I was coming in right after you," Teddy said, "but——"

"I guess I knocked you out of the way in

my hurry," said Jerry Condon. "Hope I didn't hurt you," he added.

"Oh, no, I'm all right," Teddy answered.

As the surf and the undertow was getting too rough for even skillful swimmers to be out in it, the bathers came from the water, and, after a time, Teddy and Janet went back to their cottage. Their mother at once guessed from their faces that something had happened, and she was quite alarmed when the story was told.

"I think I won't let you go down to the beach alone any more," she decided.

"Oh, Mother! we'll be real careful," pleaded Janet. "Every time before I go in I'll ask the life guard if it's all right. And if he says there's a bad sea puss I won't go in."

"I won't, either," promised Teddy.

"Well, we shall see about it," remarked Mrs. Martin. "At any rate, don't go in again to-day," and the Curlytops didn't.

There were enough other ways of having fun at Sunset Beach without going in the water to swim or bathe, and Janet and Teddy did not lack for amusements. Left to themselves, since Trouble was not well enough to come out and play, the brother

and sister, after lunch, wandered about planning different things.

"I know what we can do," said Teddy, after a while, during which time he had been tossing a ball about and Janet had put a new dress on one of her dolls.

"What can we do?" she asked.

"Go fishing," Teddy answered.

"You mean out in the fish boat like you did and get a shark?" asked the little girl. "I don't like sharks."

"I don't, either," agreed the Curlytop boy. "But I didn't mean go fishing that way. I meant stay on shore."

"How can you fish on shore?" laughed his sister.

"You know what I mean!" retorted Teddy. "We'll stay on shore and throw our hooks into the water. There's a good place down by the inlet, and I saw a fellow catch some big eels there the other day."

"I wouldn't like to catch an eel," objected Janet. "They wiggle too much!"

"That's what makes it fun!" laughed Ted. "Come on! I'll get the poles and dig some worms."

"You needn't dig me any worms," declared Janet. "You know I don't like 'em."

"What you going to bait your hook with, then?"

"I'll get a piece of meat from Norah, like I did before."

"Pooh! Fish won't bite on meat from the butcher shop."

"Crabs bite on meat," said Janet.

"Well, fish aren't crabs," was what Ted answered, as he went off to dig some worms. "But you aren't afraid of clams, are you?" he called back to his sister.

"Course not! Who's afraid of a clam?" she demanded.

"Well, then I'll get you a clam and you can put him on your hook and you'll catch a fish," said Teddy.

Teddy dug some worms for himself back of the cottage, and then, having arranged the lines, poles and hooks, he and Janet went down to the inlet. This was a sort of shallow river where the sea came in and up through a low place in the sand dunes, and at certain times of the tide the fishing was good there.

Sea clams, which are different from hard clams or soft clams, could be dug in the sand, and Teddy soon had two or three for his sister. He cracked the shells on a stone

and took out the firm meat of the clam from inside. This he put on Janet's hook for her.

"I'll bait it the first time," he told his sister. "But after that you've got to do it yourself."

"All right," she agreed. "But maybe if I catch one fish that will be enough and I won't have to bait my hook again."

"Maybe," said Teddy, but he did not believe it. Often he had to bait his hook a number of times before he caught even one small fish.

The Curlytops sat on the edge of the bank at the inlet and began fishing. Teddy had baited his hook with a worm, and Janet was fishing with clam. This, in itself, was a good thing to do, for on some days fish will take one kind of bait, and the next day they will want something else. So when you go fishing, or rather, when two of you go, it is well to take different kinds of bait, for you never can tell what a fish will like.

The tide was coming in slowly, and Teddy said this was a good sign, as the fish came in from the sea with the tide to feed in the inlet.

"Captain Oleson told me so," declared Teddy.

For some time the Curlytops did not appear to be going to have any luck. Again and again Teddy drew his hook, with its wiggling worm, up from the water, to see if it had been nibbled at. But there was no sign of a fish having been near it.

"Why don't you pull up your hook and see if you've had a nibble," Ted urged his sister, after a time.

"Oh, I don't want to," she answered. "I could tell if I had a bite 'cause my pole would jiggle."

And just then, to her own great surprise and that of her brother, Janet's pole gave a big "jiggle."

"Oh, you've got a bite! Pull up! Pull up!" shouted Ted. "I'll help you!"

He sprang to his feet, letting go his own pole, and started to run to where Janet sat.

"I can pull up my own fish!" she told him.

She gave her pole a hard yank, and something long and twisting was pulled from the water of the inlet. Over Janet's head it sailed, flapping on the grass behind her.

"Oh, you've caught an eel! You've caught a big eel!" yelled Teddy.

"I don't want an eel! I don't like 'em!

Take him off!" and Janet covered her eyes with her hands, for she really felt a little afraid of eels—they were so much like snakes, she said.

"He's a good, big eel, and lots of folks like 'em to eat!" declared Ted, as he scrambled up the bank toward the place where Janet's eel had fallen when she whipped it up in the air over her head.

But that particular eel was not destined to be fried. As Teddy reached the creature and made a dive to get hold of it, the eel squirmed off the hook.

"Look out! He's going to get away!" shouted Teddy.

And the eel did get away. Over the grass it squirmed and wiggled until, reaching the edge of the bank, it flopped over, splashed down into the water and swam away. It had only been lightly hooked, and Janet had thrown it loose from the sharp point. So there was one happy eel, at any rate.

"Aw, he got off!" said Teddy, in disappointed tones. "Just like the turtle!"

"I'm glad he did," Janet declared.

"You should have let me pull him in," went on her brother. "I'd 'a' got him, sure."

"Well, I'm glad you didn't," went on Janet. "I want to catch a real fish. Is my bait gone?"

"Yes, the eel nibbled all the clam off," Teddy answered. "But I'll put another piece on for you," and this he did, very kindly.

When Teddy went back to where he had thrown down his pole to run to try and catch the eel, the Curlytop boy found, to his delight, that he, too, had a bite.

"Oh, I've got one! I've got one!" he shouted.

And when he pulled up he did, really, have a fish. It was the kind called a lafayette, or sometimes, the spot, the latter name being given the fish because it has a small, round black spot on either side, just back of the head.

"Oh, I wish I could catch one of those," Janet exclaimed, and a little later she had that luck.

From then on the Curlytops caught several lafayettes, and they had enough for a "mess," as Norah called their catch. She cleaned and cooked the fish for supper, and very good they were.

"What you going to do now, Teddy?"

asked Janet the next day, when she saw him starting off toward the beach with the wooden sand mill he had made.

"I'm going to have some fun," was the answer. "I'm going to dig a tunnel and then I'm going to make a hill of sand and let the grains run off the hill down on my sand-mill paddles and turn it."

"I'll come and help you," offered Janet.

"Well, don't let Trouble come," urged Ted. "He'll only cave in the tunnel after I make it."

"Trouble is too sick to come," Janet said. "Mother has sent for the doctor."

"Oh, is he as sick as that?" Teddy asked.

"Oh, Mother said she don't guess he is very sick," Janet replied. "But she wants to see if it's measles or anything like that. I guess he'll be all right."

The Curlytops, with their sand pails and shovels, went down on the beach to play. They saw Mr. and Mrs. Keller just ahead of them.

"We're going to have another look for the keys and the ring," explained Mr. Keller to the children.

"We hope you find them," said Teddy, politely.

"Thank you," responded Mrs. Keller, but there was no look of hope on her face.

Teddy decided to dig a long, deep tunnel before he made the hill for his sand mill, and he at once set at this play. Janet decided she would dig a well in the sand, making it so deep that water would appear in the bottom, as she had often done before.

The Curlytops were digging a little way apart, and Janet had seen the first little trickle of water in her well when she heard Ted call:

"Look at me! Look at me!"

Janet looked. All she could see of her brother was his head. He had crawled down into the sand tunnel he had dug, and it was a large tunnel slanting down into the sand.

As Janet looked, something happened. The sand began to slip and slide, and a moment later it had covered Ted from sight.

The sand tunnel had caved in on him!

CHAPTER XV

CATCHING CRABS

JANET was so frightened for a few seconds that she did nothing but stand looking at the place where she had last seen her brother. She could no longer see Ted, for he was out of sight, in the tunnel, under the sand.

Then Janet began to do things suddenly and many things at the same time. She ran toward the place where Ted had been digging, her feet fairly flying over the sand. She reached the spot and began frantically digging with her hands. At the same time she cried:

"Oh, Teddy, come out! Oh, Teddy, come out! Oh, Teddy!"

Not that this shouting did any good, but Janet just couldn't help it. She knew that if Ted stayed under the sand long he would smother, just as he would drown if he remained too long under water.

As Janet dug away to get the sand off Ted's face she could feel a movement in the shifting pile below her. She knew that Ted was also trying to dig himself out.

Janet was on her knees, digging with both hands as she had, more than once, seen dogs digging holes in the sand on the beach. Janet tossed the grains away on either side of her. She wanted to dig down until she could uncover Ted's face. Once his mouth and nose were open to the air, he could breathe and he would be saved.

So Janet dug furiously, and she did not hear footsteps coming up behind her. She did not know any one was on the beach near her until she heard a voice ask:

"What are you playing, Janet, my dear?"

Janet gave one look over her shoulder and saw Mrs. Keller standing there.

"If you are looking for the lost keys and ring, my dear, this isn't the place they were lost," went on Mrs. Keller.

"I'm not—digging for keys!" panted Janet. "I'm digging up my brother Teddy!"

"You don't mean to tell me Teddy is under there!" gasped the white-haired lady.

"Yes'm," answered the little girl, with a sob. "He's—under here! His tunnel caved in on him." She did not stop digging as she talked, but kept her hands going rapidly, scattering the sand back of her.

"Oh, my dear! How dreadful!" cried Mrs. Keller. Then she lost no more time, but also started digging beside Janet.

In less than half a minute—so quickly had it all happened—they had uncovered Ted's face. The poor little chap was quite red, for he had held his breath, knowing what it would mean to breathe in sand—it would be worse, he felt sure, than breathing in water.

"Ah!" gasped Ted, taking a long breath as he felt the fresh air fanning his cheeks. "Ah! Um!"

Then Mrs. Keller noticed some pieces of shingles that Ted had used as a lining for his tunnel. Some of these had fallen over his face and had kept the sand out of his nose and mouth for a little while. Otherwise the boy might not have come out of it as luckily as he did.

"You poor child!" murmured Mrs. Keller. "I must take you right home and get a doctor."

"Oh, I—I'm all right—thank you!" gasped the little Curlytop lad, for his breath was still short. "I'm all—right—now," he went on, panting after his big gulps of fresh air. "I guess I dug my tunnel too thin near the top," he said, "and that's what made it fall in."

"I wouldn't crawl into a sand tunnel after this, if I were you," said Mrs. Keller, when Ted had crawled out and had shaken the sand from his clothes. Some had gotten down inside his waist and was tickling his back, making him squirm.

"I'm not going to do it any more," he said. "Or, if I do, I'll put a lot of shingles inside like the men do when they dig sewer trenches."

"I wouldn't do it at all, if I were you," warned Mrs. Keller, and Ted said he wouldn't.

The children's fright over, they continued to play on the beach, but Ted contented himself with digging a well, and did not try any more tunnels. Mrs. Keller watched them for a little while. As she was walking away, Janet asked:

"Did you find your wedding ring?"

"No, my dear, I'm sorry to say I didn't," was the answer.

"And did Mr. Keller find his keys?" Teddy wanted to know.

"Not those, either," was the reply. "I'm afraid they are gone, and he may have a great deal of trouble over them."

"I'm going to look for them again to-morrow," promised Teddy. "I'd look for them some more to-day," he added, "but I have to go crabbing."

"Yes, this is the best season for going crabbing," agreed Mrs. Keller. "They are large now and very good."

Then she walked off up the beach toward the cottage where she and her husband were staying. Janet looked at her brother and exclaimed:

"You didn't tell me you were going crabbing!"

"Didn't I?" asked Ted. "Well, I forgot about it, I guess."

"Are you going to take me?" Janet wanted to know.

"Sure, you can come if you like," Ted replied. And then, as if knowing that this was not a very polite invitation, nor a cordial one, he added: "I'd like to have you come,

Jan. You don't have to bait any hooks when you catch crabs."

"I know you don't," said the little girl. "You just tie a chunk of meat to a string and put it in the water. Then Mr. Crab grabs hold of the meat in his claws and you lift him up and then you slip a net under him and you catch him."

"You do if he doesn't let go the meat or wiggle out of the net," returned Teddy, with a laugh.

"Come on—let's go!" cried Janet. "It will be more fun than playing on the sand. Are you going to crab off the dock?"

"No," Ted replied, "we'll go over to the little back bay."

"But you need a boat if you go to the little bay," Janet objected. "You can't catch crabs from the shore—the water isn't deep enough."

"I know it," Ted answered. "I'm going to get a boat."

"Where?"

"A fellow I know said I could take his."

"What boy?" asked Janet.

"His name is Jimmie Merton. I met him down on the beach here the other day. He's got a boat. It's hidden in the weeds on the

shore of the little bay. He said I could take it any time I wanted it and catch crabs. He says you get big, fat crabs over in the little bay."

"Oh, that'll be lots of fun!" laughed Janet. She had caught a few crabs, with her brother, from a small dock in the inlet not far from the cottage, but the larger and better crabs were out in deeper water, where a boat was needed.

"Maybe Mother won't let us go," suggested Janet, as she and Teddy walked up toward the cottage.

"Oh, I guess she will," the little Curlytop boy answered. "Daddy said, yesterday, he wished he had some boiled hard crabs, and when I tell Mother I can get some she'll let us go."

"I hope she does," murmured Janet.

Mrs. Martin knew that her husband liked crabs, and when Ted offered to get them his mother said he and his sister might go if they would be very careful.

"But don't fall out of the boat," she warned.

"We won't," promised Ted. "Anyhow, the water isn't very deep."

"Be careful just the same," his mother said again.

"Is they goin' after nellifunts?" asked Trouble, who was recovering from his little illness. "I want to go after nellifunts!"

"No, not this time, dear," his mother said. "You'll stay with me and I'll tell you a story."

"Story 'bout a bear?" asked Trouble, his eyes opening wide.

"Yes, a story about a bear."

"Story 'bout a bad bear?" he pleaded.

"Yes," laughed his mother, "I'll tell you a story about a bad bear."

But Trouble was not yet quite satisfied.

"I want a story 'bout a terrible bad bear an' a nellifunt catchin' a terrible bad bear!" he insisted.

"All right," agreed his mother, and then Trouble cuddled down in her arms, satisfied, while Ted and Janet went crabbing.

And a very curious adventure was to happen to them before they came back.

CHAPTER XVI

DRIFTING AWAY

SIDE by side, carrying their crab nets, an empty peach basket and their bait, Ted and Janet walked toward a small bay that was part of the big bay on which Sunset Beach faced. The little bay was long, but not very wide, nor was it very deep. Near it were several small islands, where summer residents had built cottages.

"I guess we'll get this more than full of big crabs," said Ted to his sister, swinging the empty peach basket.

"I hope we do," remarked Janet. "There'll be a lot for Daddy, won't there? I hope they don't bite us."

"Crabs won't bite if you know how to take hold of 'em," Teddy explained. "You got to grab 'em by one of their back flippers."

"I'll let you grab 'em," said Janet.

Norah had given the children some

chunks of raw meet, which they tied on short lengths of string, for, as Teddy had said, the bay was not very deep, and the bottom, on which the crabs crawled in search of food, was not far down.

"I've got three strings a piece and bait," said Teddy. "We can put three lines out on each side of the boat."

"Then we'll catch lots of crabs," remarked Janet.

When you go crabbing you can have almost as many lines out as you can watch—it is not like catching fish with a hook. Crabs do not take the bait in their mouth. They catch hold of it in their front claws, and start to go away with it to some quiet hole, or under some rock, where they may eat as they please.

But as soon as they start to walk along the bottom, or swim in the water, taking away the bait with them, they tighten the string, which should be made fast to something, or, if you are using but one cord, held in the hand.

"And you want to pull up your strings carefully, when you do pull them," Teddy advised his sister. "If you don't, the crab

will let go the bait and swim off and you haven't got him."

"I know," she said. "I lost a dandy big one when I was crabbing on the dock last week."

The Curlytops soon reached the edge of the long, shallow bay in which they were going to crab. It was a warm, pleasant day of sunshine, with scarcely a cloud in the sky.

"Where's the boat?" asked Janet, looking about as she and her brother reached the place.

"I know how to find it—come on," answered Ted.

He led the way along the shore of the bay, in and out along the windings and turns of a path which wandered amid the sedge grass that grew thick and tall along the shore.

"Jimmie hides his boat in the weeds so no one can find it," explained Ted.

"Then how *you* going to find it?" Janet wanted to know.

"He told me how to look for it," her brother explained. "You go along until you see three sticks sticking up—three sticks in a row."

"Yes," murmured Janet.

"Well, the boat isn't there. You go along

a little farther till you see two stakes—one straight and the other crooked."

"Yes," murmured Janet. "Is the boat there?"

"No," answered Ted. "You go along a little more until you see two crooked stakes stuck up, and there's the boat."

"It's like a game, isn't it?" asked his sister.

"Kind of," Ted admitted.

The Curlytops tramped along until they came to the first three sticks sticking up, as Jimmie had described them. Then they reached the spot along the shore of the bay where one stick was crooked and the other straight.

"We're 'most there now!" Teddy exclaimed.

"Oh, I see the two crooked stakes!" cried Janet, a few minutes later, and there, in a little hollow of the weeds, a sort of tiny harbor well hidden, was the boat.

"Now we'll get a lot of crabs for Daddy!" said Ted, as he pulled the boat out so Janet could get in.

It was not much of a boat. A flat-bottomed punt, it might be called. It was square and broad at either end, not pointed

in the bow and gracefully rounded in the stern, as are most boats.

"It's a dandy boat!" cried Ted, as he worked it out. "I wish I had one like it."

Janet looked at some muddy water in the bottom—muddy water that sloshed around under the seats.

"It leaks!" she objected. "Look at the water coming in!"

"Aw, it's only a little," said Teddy. "You can take off your shoes and stockings and put them on the seat, if you're afraid of getting wet."

"I guess I will," Janet said, and, sitting down on the edge of the boat, she began to do this. "But maybe we'll get so full of water we'll sink when we get out crabbing," she added.

"Oh, no!" her brother hastened to assure her. "I guess this is only a little water that rained in. Anyhow, if the boat was going to sink from the leaks it would be sunk now, wouldn't it?"

"I guess so," said Janet, slowly. "Anyhow, I hope it doesn't sink."

"We could wade ashore if it did," Teddy told her. "This little bay isn't deep at all."

He, too, took off his shoes, and when the

peach basket, the crab nets and the baited lines had been put in the punt, Ted pushed off from shore with one of the oars which he found hidden in the tall grass, at a place Jimmie had told him to look for them.

"We're going to have a lovely time," said Janet, as she sat on one of the seats, idly splashing her bare feet in the water that sloshed around on the bottom of the boat. "I wish I had brought one of my dolls with me."

"You don't want any doll when you come crabbing," Teddy answered. "She might fall out of the boat or a crab might get loose and pinch her."

"That's so!" agreed Janet. "Oh, Teddy!" she cried, "s'posin' a crab gets loose in the boat and scrabbles all over? He'll bite our toes! I wish I'd let my shoes stay on!"

"You can hold your feet up in the air if a crab gets loose," Teddy told her, after thinking it over, "till I catch him and put him back in the basket."

"Oh, all right," Janet remarked, after a moment or two.

She had often seen crabs "skiddering" around on the dock, either after they had crawled out of a basket piled too full or when

they had escaped from the net as they were being landed. And once a crab had caught hold of the tip of Janet's shoe in his claws. Of course he did not hurt the little girl, but, afterward, she could see where the leather had been cut, for a crab can pinch very hard with his claws—often drawing blood from some unlucky fisherman's finger.

"Well, I hope no crab pinches me," murmured the little girl.

Teddy was now rowing out toward the middle of the little bay, for there, Jimmie had told him, was the best crabbing. The clumsy punt was not easy to send along, and Teddy was not very strong on the oars. But he and his sister were in no hurry, and they soon found that the tide, which was coming in, helped to carry them along.

"It's best to catch crabs when the tide comes in," said Teddy, with the air of an old "sea dog."

"Why?" asked Janet.

" 'Cause it's then they come in from the ocean to eat up in the inlets and bays, and they'll bite better," Teddy answered.

"We're out awful far from shore," Janet remarked, after Teddy had rowed for several minutes. "Look, how far it is, Teddy."

"Oh, this isn't far," he said. "And, anyhow, the water isn't deep. Look, I can touch bottom with an oar," and he did this, pulling one in from the lock to show his sister. The water was, really, only about three feet deep, so that only shallow draught boats could be used, even at high tide; nor was the "little bay" very wide, and the children were still within this small bay.

"Well, don't you guess we're out far enough?" asked Janet, after Teddy had rowed a bit farther.

"Yes, I guess so," he agreed. "Now we'll anchor and catch a lot of crabs."

Those of you who have been crabbing know that the boat must be kept still, or nearly so, while the crab fishing goes on. For this reason all crabbing boats are provided with anchors.

Jimmie had a stone for his anchor—a stone tied on the end of a rope, the other end of the rope being fast to the boat. Teddy cast the stone anchor overboard. It fell in with a splash, the tide swung the boat around, facing up the bay, and the Curlytops cast their six lines of bait over the side. Each string was made fast to nails driven

in the edge, or gunwale, of the boat for this purpose.

"Now you watch your lines and I'll watch mine," Teddy said, in a whisper. He had an idea—as did many other boys—that to catch crabs or fish one must not be too noisy. I suppose too much noise might frighten away the fish, but whether or not they can hear ordinary talk and laughter when they are down under the water, I don't know.

At any rate, Ted and Janet kept as quiet as they could, though they had to talk and laugh a little. It was a wonderful day and they felt very jolly.

Suddenly Janet murmured:

"I've got a bite!"

"Pull him in, then," Teddy whispered in answer. "But pull it up slow! I'll get the net ready!"

A look at his three lines showed that all of them were loose, or "slack," as a fisherman would say. This showed no crabs were trying to walk or swim away with the piece of meat. But one of Janet's cords was pulled out straight, and it was jerking in a queer way.

Carefully she began to pull it up, a few inches at a time. But, somehow, the line

came up only a little way, and then Janet could pull it no more.

"It's stuck," she told her brother.

"I guess the crab's holding on to the bottom of the bay with his legs," Ted explained. "They've got sharp legs, besides their claws, and they stick their legs down in the mud and hold on. Pull a little harder, but don't jerk!"

Janet tried this way, and found, to her delight, that her cord was now coming in. There was a weight on the end, she could tell, but this might be only the weight of the chunk of meat used for bait. It is not always easy to tell when a crab is on, as, once they are raised up off the bottom, they swim along, making themselves very light.

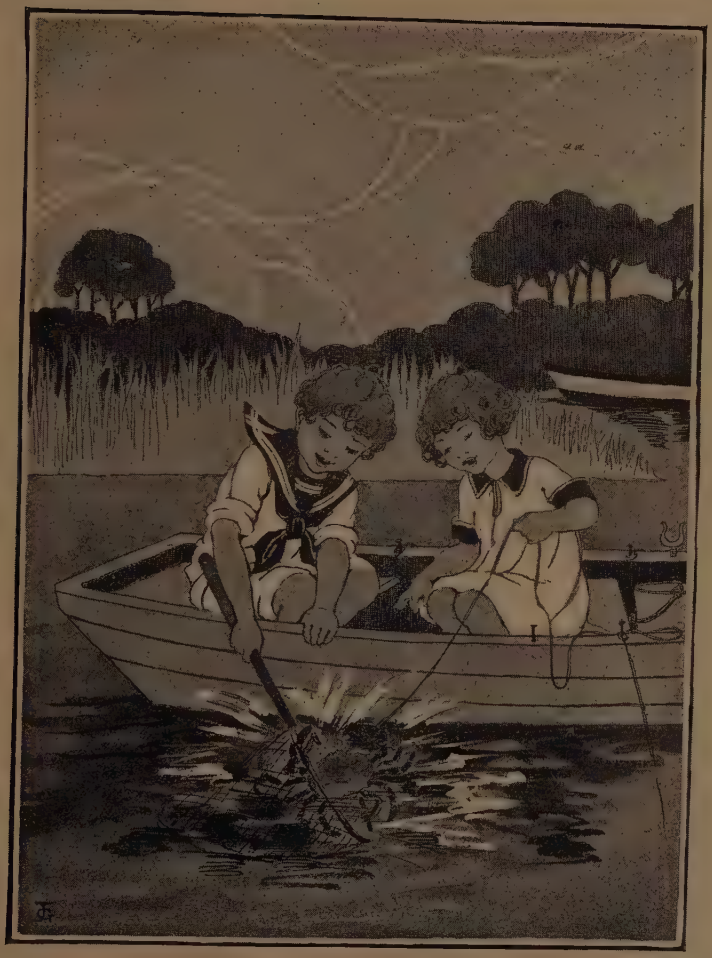
But Janet's bait was now only a little way below the surface of the bay, and Ted, looking over the side of the boat, exclaimed:

"Oh, you've caught a big one! You have a whopper! A blue claw one! Regular giant!"

"Oh, I hope I don't lose him!" exclaimed Janet. The children had now forgotten all about talking quietly.

"I'll get him!" declared Ted.

Quickly and quietly, as he had seen the



HE MADE A QUICK SCOOP WITH THE NET, AND OUT OF THE WATER CAME MR. CRAB.

fishermen do, Ted slipped the short-handled net into the water and under Janet's crab, including the bait, for the crab was clinging with both claws to the chunk of beef, eating as he was lifted up. The crab did not know what was going to happen to him.

"I've got him!" cried Teddy.

He made a quick scoop with the net, and out of water came Mr. Crab. As soon as he found himself raised up out of the water where he lived, the crab let go the meat and began kicking with all his legs, his claws and his flippers, trying to escape. But he was entangled in the meshes of the net, and a moment later Ted turned the net upside down over the waiting peach basket.

"Don't let him get loose!" squealed Janet, sitting up on the seat and drawing her bare feet off the bottom of the boat.

"He won't get loose!" declared Ted, and the crab was soon scuttling around on the bottom of the basket, opening and closing its big, blue claws, shooting out its eyes, which seemed to be on hinges. And from the crab's mouth came foam and bubbles as if he were very angry, as, no doubt, he was.

"You caught a dandy, Janet!" exclaimed Teddy, as he untangled his sister's line and

bait from the net and tossed the meat overboard again. "Now it's my turn to get one."

And, surely enough, a moment later one of Ted's lines started to move, and, taking hold, he could feel a crab pulling. He lifted his bait toward the surface, and Janet, using the net, soon landed another crab. It was not as large as the one she had caught, but it was of good size.

"We're having good luck!" said Teddy.

"And lots of fun!" added his sister.

They caught several more crabs, some large and some smaller. The peach basket was filling up. Suddenly one of the crabs scrambled over the side of the peach basket to the bottom of the boat.

"Oh, one's loose! One's loose!" screamed Janet. "He'll bite my toes!"

"I'll catch him! He won't hurt you!" shouted Ted. He knew just how to catch up a crab by one of the back "flippers," so that the sea creature could not turn its claws around to pinch. "Get back in your basket where you belong!" laughed Ted, as he tossed the crab—a big one with blue claws—in on top of the others. There was a great

clashing of claws, the crabs pinching one another.

"I'm glad he didn't get me!" exclaimed Janet, as she saw the lively fellow settle down.

"I'll put some seaweed on top of them," offered Teddy.

This he did, scooping up some green weed, like immense leaves of lettuce, from the bottom of the bay in his net. Thus covered, the crabs grew quieter.

Then the Curlytops went on catching crabs, hauling up line after line as they saw the cords straighten out, one after another. The crabs were biting well—not exactly biting as a fish bites, but taking hold of the bait in their claws, which was much the same thing.

"Well, I guess we have enough," said Teddy, after a while. "The basket's nearly full."

"Oh, I've got one more on my line!" exclaimed Janet. "I think he's a big one, for he pulls hard. Let me get him, Ted."

"All right," he agreed. And when Janet had pulled up her cord Teddy leaned over, ready with the net.

His foot slipped on some of the slimy,

green seaweed in the bottom of the boat, and Ted almost fell overboard. However, he saved himself by grasping one of the oars, though both of the wooden blades rattled about in the boat.

"Don't let my crab get away!" cried Janet.

"I've got him!" shouted her brother. And he did get the squirming creature in the net, dumping Mr. Crab into the basket.

"There, that's the last one!" said Janet, with a sigh of satisfaction. "Now we'll go home. Oh, but, Teddy! Look!" she suddenly cried.

"What's the matter?" asked the boy.

"The oars are gone!" Janet answered. "And we're drifting away! Oh, Teddy, we're adrift, and we'll go out to sea! Oh, dear!"

CHAPTER XVII

ON THE ISLAND

DRIFTING away the Curlytops surely were. The tide was carrying them down the little bay, and out toward the big bay and the open sea, though this place, where the big waves rolled and where sharks and other big fishes swam, was still a long way off.

"What do you think happened?" asked Janet.

"I guess the anchor stone came loose," answered her brother. He reached over with the handle of the net and pushed back into the basket one of the big, blue-clawed crabs that was trying to crawl out from beneath the covering of green seaweed.

"The oars are gone, too," said Janet.

This was true. When Teddy slipped, the time he was lifting in the last crab his sister caught, he had knocked both oars overboard. They were now floating away.

"Maybe I can reach 'em with the crab net," suggested Ted. He leaned over the side of the punt, stretching as far he could toward one of the floating oars.

"Look out—don't fall!" warned Janet.

Teddy almost went overboard, but pulled himself back just in time. He could not reach the oar, which drifted farther away.

"Where's the other oar, Janet?" her brother asked.

"It's on this side, but it's farther off than that one," the little Curlytop girl answered.

Teddy looked over. The second oar was, indeed, at a greater distance from the punt than the one the little boy had been trying to reach. He saw at a glance that it would be of no use to try to get this back.

"Both oars gone!" murmured Teddy, in sorrowful tones. "Jimmie'll be mad. He won't want me to take his boat again."

"Maybe you can get 'em back," suggested Janet. "But what made the stone anchor let go of us, Teddy?"

"I guess it slipped out of the rope," he answered. "I'll look."

He pulled up the piece of clothesline that had held the boat, keeping it from drifting. As he had guessed, the stone that Jimmie

had tied in a loop of the cord had slipped out. The punt had "slipped her anchor," as a sailor would have said.

"If we get hungry, can we eat crabs?" inquired Janet, after a pause, during which the boat had drifted along on the tide.

"What do you mean—eat crabs?" asked Teddy, in some surprise.

"I mean if we can't get home, and if we're shipwrecked, can we eat the crabs we caught?" the little girl explained.

"Hum! I s'pose we could—if they were cooked," answered Ted. "But we aren't going to be shipwrecked."

"What are we going to be, then?" Janet wanted to know. "How we going to get back home, Teddy? Maybe if we could get ashore, or on some island, we could build a fire and cook the crabs."

"Maybe," agreed her brother. "That would be a lot of fun!" His eyes sparkled as he thought of it. "Only," he added, "we haven't anything to cook the crabs in."

"And I don't like crabs, anyhow," said Janet. "Oh, dear, Teddy! what can we do? We're drifting away awful fast!"

Indeed this was so. The tide was now running out more strongly, having turned

since the Curlytops started crabbing. In the punt they were being rapidly carried out of the little bay.

"Can't you do something?" Janet begged.

"Maybe I can push us ashore with the handle of the crab net," Ted replied. "But pretty soon we'll see another boat and we'll holler for them to help us."

This was a new thought, and he and his sister looked out from their small bay, across the wide expanse of water, thinking they might sight another craft that would come to help them. However, as it happened, there was no other boat anywhere near them. Sometimes the water seemed dotted with boats, like raisins in a cake, and again there would be scarcely one. It was so now—the Curlytops appeared to be the only party out crabbing.

"I guess I'd better push along," remarked Teddy.

"Maybe you can push us to one of those islands out there," suggested Janet, pointing with her hand to several small ones that showed green down the sparkling bay.

"Maybe I can," agreed her brother.

Using the handle of the crab net as a pole, Teddy began shoving the boat along. At

first this was easy, for they were in a shallow place, and it was not far to the bottom. Teddy tried to push the boat over to one of the oars, for he knew he could work much better if he had one of the broad blades. But the tide had taken them out of reach.

"Well, if we get on one of the islands, maybe we can get some oars there," said Janet.

"Maybe," agreed Teddy. He kept on pushing with the crab pole, and as he did so Janet looked around for a sight of some other boat that might come to aid the Curly-tops.

Once a motor boat, with a merry party in it, passed not very far off. Ted and Janet raised their voices in shouts for help. But the young people in the motor boat were laughing, talking, and singing, and did not seem to hear the children calling. Or, if they did, they may have thought it was just a boy and a girl skylarking or calling for fun.

At any rate they paid no attention, but sped on, and Ted, who had given up pushing for a time, started to do so again. Once the handle of the net failed to reach bottom. Janet noticed this and said:

"It's deeper here, isn't it?"

"Oh, a little," Teddy answered, for he did not want his sister to become frightened. "But it will soon be shallow again," he added.

And this proved to be the case.

On and on drifted the Curlytops in their boat, the tide carrying them and Teddy pushing with the crab pole. The crabs in the basket were quiet now, under their covering of seaweed.

"I wish we had a basket of apples instead of a basket of crabs," murmured Janet, after a time.

"Why?" Teddy wanted to know.

"So I could eat one."

"Are you hungry?"

"Course I am! Aren't you?"

"A little," admitted Teddy. It was long past the time when, each afternoon, the Curlytops were in the habit of having a little lunch.

"Maybe we'll get something to eat on that island," suggested Janet.

"Where?" asked her brother.

"Over there," and she pointed to one in the distance. It was the nearest island to the drifting boat. "Why don't you push over

that way, Teddy?" Janet asked. "Steer over there."

"I will," answered the boy, and he changed the direction of the punt so that it was headed for the island.

The shore which Teddy and Janet had left to take to the boat—the shore where their summer cottage was located—seemed very far away indeed. Janet found herself wondering if they would ever get back to it. But now there was something else to wonder about, for they were nearing the island.

"We'll land there in a minute," Teddy said, for the tide was carrying them toward it.

"Do you s'pose anybody lives there?" Janet inquired.

"I don't know—maybe," Teddy answered.

The punt struck the soft sand and mud of the island beach with a little thump. The children had made a landing—no longer were they adrift. They were a little way out on the large bay, but were not being carried toward the open sea; though, as a matter of fact, they had not worried about this.

"Well, here we are," announced Ted, as

he jumped out and pulled the boat farther up on shore. "I'll help you out, Janet."

"Are you going to take the crabs?" she asked.

"Course not! We'll leave 'em in the boat. But I've got to make the boat fast so it won't drift away. If it did, we might have to stay on this island all night."

"Do you s'pose anybody lives here on this island, Ted?" asked his sister. From where they stood they could see nothing but trees and bushes, but the Curlytops knew that there were summer cottages on some of the islands.

"I don't know. We'll soon find out," he answered.

"If there does anybody live here," went on the little girl, "maybe we could sell 'em the crabs we caught—I mean we could give 'em the crabs and they'd give us something else to eat for 'em."

"We caught the crabs for Daddy!" objected Teddy, having finished making fast the boat.

"I know we did, but he wouldn't want us to be hungry."

"No, I s'pose not," assented Ted. "Well, if nobody will give us something to eat for

nothing, we'll trade 'em the crabs. But we'll leave 'em here in the boat until we find out."

"Yes," remarked Janet. " 'Cause, now, maybe if we carried the basket of crabs through the woods they'd get lost. And, besides, they might reach out and pinch us, the crabs might."

"They might," admitted Teddy. "We'll leave 'em in the boat. Now come on and we'll see if anybody lives here."

Hand in hand the Curlytops started to follow a path that led through the trees and shrubbery. As they went along it became certain that some one lived, or had lived, on the island. For they could see where trees had recently been cut down and brush trimmed away.

Then, a little farther along, they saw a place where a little hut had been built. It was rather tumble-down now, the window glass was broken, and the door hung crookedly on one hinge.

"I guess that's maybe where fishermen stay, sometimes," suggested Teddy.

"I wish there was a fisherman here now, with something to eat," murmured Janet. "I'm hungry!"

"So'm I," admitted Ted. "But maybe we'll soon come to a house."

They walked on a little farther. The path was broader now, and the woods showed that they were under care, for the underbrush had been cleared away.

"Teddy!" called Janet, coming to a stop as they were about to go down into a little dell, or glade—a place where tall ferns grew and where it seemed dismal and dark. "Teddy!"

"What's the matter?" he asked, for he felt his sister hanging back. "Are you scairt?"

"A little," she admitted.

"What of?"

"Snakes!"

"Snakes! There aren't any snakes here!" laughed Ted.

"Well, I heard a noise," said Janet, taking a few steps backward. "It sounded just like a rattlesnake that Daddy told us about. Listen!"

The children remained quiet for a few moments and listened. A peculiar whirring, buzzing, rattling sound came to their ears.

"There! Hear that!" cried Janet. "It's a rattlesnake! I'm going back to the boat!"

She started to run, but with a laugh Ted ran after her, caught her and pulled her back.

"That wasn't a rattlesnake!" he chuckled.

"What was it?"

"Nothing but a locust! Listen! There he goes again."

Janet listened. The sound was nearer now, and as it died away in faintness the little girl remembered that it was the song of the locust—the hot-day call of this curious insect.

"Oh, all right!" Janet murmured. "I'm glad it wasn't a snake!"

"Come on!" insisted Ted. "We'll soon be out of this dark place!"

But as they went down into the little dell, and were in the very gloomiest spot of all, there suddenly sounded a rustling in the bushes, which moved and shook.

"Oh!" screamed Janet, drawing back.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RICH MAN

"What's the matter?" cried Teddy. "There aren't any snakes here, I tell you!"

" 'Tisn't a snake," answered Janet. "But did you see the bushes move? And there's something black in 'em! Look!" She pointed. Teddy could see a black animal moving along behind the screen of bushes. "Oh, maybe it's a bear!" murmured Janet.

"There aren't any bears here!" declared the Curlytop boy. He was not altogether sure of this, but he felt it best to tell Janet so, anyhow.

And, truly enough, this did not prove to be any fierce animal at all. As Janet and Ted stood there waiting, with fast-beating hearts it must be said, there came out from the bushes a dog with black, curling hair.

The black dog barked once or twice on seeing the Curlytops and then, wagging his

tail in a friendly fashion, he frisked about them. They knew at once he was a friendly dog, and the dog seemed to know, in an instant, that here were children who loved animals.

"Oh, you darling dog!" exclaimed Janet, patting his head.

"He is a good one," agreed Ted, pulling his ears, which the dog seemed to like.

"If there's a dog here there must be people," Janet said. "I mean somebody must live here."

"Yes," Ted admitted. "Unless, maybe, they're having a picnic. But we'll soon find out. Go on, Fido, or whatever your name is," he said to the dog. "Show us where the house is. Home, Fido!"

Fido, or whatever his name was, seemed to understand. He looked first into the face of Ted and then into the face of Janet. He wagged his tail to show that everything was all right, and then started off along a path that led up out of the dark dell.

"Come on, we'll follow him," Teddy decided.

This seemed to be just what the dog wanted, for, after going on a little way, he

stopped and looked back as if saying to the children:

"It's all right! Come on! I'll lead you where you want to go."

"I hope he leads us where we can get something to eat," murmured Janet, as if understanding what the dog was saying. "I'm terribly hungry; aren't you, Ted?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied, "I am. All right, Fido, we're coming!" he told the dog.

This seemed to satisfy the animal, for, without further looking back or barking, he trotted on along the path which, every minute, became more and more open and plain.

"Now we're coming to something," declared Ted, in a few minutes. "These are regular grounds like around a big cottage." For they could see lawns and beds of shrubbery and flowers.

"I see the house!" suddenly cried Janet. "There it is—in among the trees!"

She pointed to a large mansion—a white house with green shutters. Plainly it was the home of some one with money, so large was the place and so well kept up and with such large grounds around it.

The dog, too, Fido or whatever his name

was, seemed to know that he was near home, for he began to bark as if giving a signal that he was coming.

Ted and Janet hurried along after the animal, who barked louder and more often the nearer he came to the house. Suddenly a voice called:

"Quiet, Nero! What are you making all that fuss about? Quiet!"

Instantly the dog stopped.

"His name's Nero—not Fido," whispered Janet.

"Yes, I guess it is," assented her brother.

The dog had run on farther ahead now, and the children could see, through the trees and bushes, that Nero was leaping about a tall man in a black suit, who was walking with a cane. The man appeared a trifle lame. But he seemed as glad to see the dog as the dog was to meet his master.

"Where have you been, Nero? Running away again?" the Curlytops heard the man ask the dog.

As if in answer, Nero looked back to where he had left Ted and Janet. He barked once or twice and then ran on to the bush behind which stood the boy and his sister. It was as if the dog said:

"Come on out, children, and show yourselves. Show yourselves to my master. Then he'll know I didn't run away. He'll know that I went into the woods to get you to bring you safely out. Come, children, show yourselves!"

This Ted and Janet did, stepping from the shadow of the shrubbery into the sunshine on the curving gravel walk that led up to the big, white house.

"Oh, hello there! Where did you come from?" exclaimed the man, in surprise, as he saw the children. "Nero, where did these two come from?"

Nero barked in answer, as much as to say:

"I brought them. That's why I have been away so long."

The man with the shining, black, gold-headed cane, leaning slightly on it as he walked, approached Ted and Janet. He looked at them with more of a frown on his face than a smile, and asked, rather sternly:

"What are you two doing here on my island? Don't you know there are signs up forbidding trespassers?"

"No, sir, we didn't know it," answered Teddy.

"And we couldn't help coming!" added Janet. "We are shipwrecked!"

"Shipwrecked! Bless my soul! Shipwrecked!" exclaimed the man. "You don't mean it! I didn't hear of any ship being wrecked around here. Besides, the bay is too shallow for any ship. Come now, no nonsense!" and he spoke sternly. "What are you doing on my island?"

"We—we didn't know it was yours," faltered Ted.

"And we wouldn't have come here, but we got adrift while we were crabbing," explained Janet. "We lost our oars and the anchor stone slipped out and—and—we'll give you a basket of crabs if you give us something to eat!" she finished, with a sigh.

"Crabs? You'll give me crabs for something to eat? Bless my—" began the old gentleman.

"Yes, sir!" broke in Janet, anxious to tell everything at once. "We've got a whole basket of crabs in the boat at the other end of the island—your island," she added.

"They're big crabs, too," put in Ted.

"And I caught the biggest one!" continued his sister. "It's got blue claws!"

"Crabs! Crabs! What do I want of

crabs?" asked the man in rather a testy, cross voice.

"You can boil them and make a salad," volunteered Ted. "That's what my father does with them. We caught the crabs for him, but we'll sell 'em to you, cheap. My sister's hungry, and thirsty too, I guess, and I am, too, and——"

"Yes, I'm awful thirsty," sighed Janet.

"Do you mean to say that you go around catching crabs and getting adrift and then you trade the crabs for something to eat?" asked the gentleman.

"Oh, no, sir!" Ted hastened to explain. "This was an accident. This is the first time we have been crabbing in the bay. I borrowed Jimmie's boat, and I lost his oars. I guess I'll have to pay for them. Generally we crab off the dock near our cottage, but this time——"

"Oh, you're summer visitors, like myself!" exclaimed the man, and, for the first time a smile appeared on his wrinkled face. "I thought you didn't look like natives. Hum—well—so you're hungry and thirsty, are you?"

"Yes, sir," said Janet.

"I'll go get you the crabs," offered Ted,

for he seemed to think the man was going to bargain with him.

"No, don't do that!" called the man after him. "I don't want your crabs! I never eat them! They give me indigestion. They're bad for me. Save them for your father."

"My father will pay you if you give us something to eat," said Janet.

"Um! We'll talk about that later," chuckled the old gentleman.

"Here, Peter," he added, as a colored man-servant appeared along another path, "take these children up to the house and see that the cook gives them something to eat—and drink, too," he added. "They're thirsty. Give them lemonade or milk—whatever they want."

"Yes, sah, Mr. Narr," answered the colored man, and at that name Ted and Janet started in surprise. "Did yo' say I was to hab de cook gib 'em lemonade an' milk, sah?"

"Lemonade and milk? The idea! Of course not! Don't be stupid, Peter. I said lemonade *or* milk—not both! Whatever they want, though. They've been shipwrecked, Peter, and cast away upon this island. It isn't exactly a desert island,

though," he added, with a chuckle, as he looked at the beautiful large house where he lived. "But they were shipwrecked, Peter, and we must feed the shipwrecked ones."

"Shipwrecked, sah?" and the colored man looked at his master in a strange way.

"Well, their boat drifted away. It's much the same thing. Now take them up and feed them, and let me know when they've had enough. You'll find me here with Nero," and he patted the dog's black head.

"Yes, sah, Mr. Narr! Yes, sah!" murmured Peter. "Come along ob me, chilluns," he added, with a kind smile.

Ted and Janet liked Peter at once. He had a kind way about him. Perhaps this had something to do with the magic words of food and drink.

The colored man led Ted and Janet up toward the rear of the large house. He took them in at a side entrance, where a big sun parlor was filled with lovely wicker furniture—books on the tables, and near the easy chairs were more tables with vases of flowers. Through the sun parlor Peter led the two into a small dining room.

"Sit right down yeah, chilluns," he di-

rected, "an yo' all kin be fed right soon."

Somewhat in a daze at the rapidity with which it had all happened, the Curlytops sat down. Peter went from the room and presently came back with a kind-looking colored woman, who smiled at the boy and girl.

"Dere dey am, Sarah!" announced Peter, also smiling. "Dey is de shipwrecked chilluns whut is to be fed and drinked, Mr. Narr done say."

"Shipwrecked! Whut yo' mean?" demanded the colored woman.

"Our boat just drifted away; that's all," explained Ted. "We sort of pretended it was a shipwreck."

"Well, yo' all is hungry, isn't yo'?" demanded Peter.

"Yes," admitted Janet.

"An' yo' all is thirsty, isn't yo'?"

"I should say so!" exclaimed Teddy.

"Well, den, dey is to be eated and drinked," explained Peter. "And den Mr. Narr wants to see 'em!"

Still in somewhat of a daze, Ted and Janet ate the food that was soon set before them—bread and butter and jam, lovely little cakes, and some glasses of milk. Peter had spoken about the choice they were to have, of

lemonade or milk, and the Curlytops had selected milk.

Peter had gone out while the children were eating, but he came back before they had quite finished. In the meanwhile Ted and Janet had been talking together in low tones.

"Did you hear the name of this man that owns the island?" asked Ted of his sister.

"Yes—Mr. Narr."

"Do you know who he is?" whispered Ted.

"I guess he's the man that Mr. Keller works for," said Janet. "The one he lost the keys of and——"

"Hush-s-s-s!" exclaimed Ted, quickly clapping a hand over his sister's mouth, for they were alone in the small dining room just then. "Don't speak of the—well, you know what." He didn't want to mention keys.

"Why not?" asked Janet.

"'Cause Mr. Keller doesn't want Mr. Narr to know they're lost. Mr. Keller thinks he can get another set made, maybe, without Mr. Narr knowing it. 'Cause if Mr. Narr knows Mr. Keller lost the keys he may dis-

charge him and Mr. Keller wouldn't have any job."

"Oh, now I 'member!" murmured Janet. "I 'most forgot."

"Mr. Keller said Mr. Narr lived somewhere on an island in the bay," went on Ted. "But I didn't think we'd visit him."

"I didn't, either," said Janet.

The meal over, Peter appeared again and led them out into the grounds.

"Hello, children!" exclaimed the gentleman with the gold-headed cane, as he caught sight of the boy and girl. "Let's see—did you tell me your names?" he asked.

"We're the Curlytops!" exclaimed Janet, almost before she thought.

"The what? Curlytops!"

"That isn't exactly our *real* name," put in Teddy. "It's just what they call us on account of our hair."

"Oh, I see," laughed the gentleman. "Well, I'm glad to meet you, Curlytops. My name is Narr."

"Yes, we heard Peter call you that," said Janet, as she stole a look at her brother.

"Now tell me where you live, and I'll see about getting you two shipwrecked ones home," went on Mr. Narr. And when the

Curlytops told him they were spending the summer at Sunset Beach Mr. Narr exclaimed:

"Sunset Beach! Why, that's where my secretary is staying! Mr. Keller! Perhaps you know him?"

"Yes—yes—we know him," admitted Ted, his heart beating rather fast. Somehow, as he said afterward, he felt as though something was going to happen.

"You do, eh?" exclaimed Mr. Narr, in surprise. "So you know my Mr. Keller, do you? Well, that's good. I wonder if you could take him a message for me?"

"We'll be glad to," said Teddy, politely.

"Very good. Tell him, please, that I'm stopping here—I guess he knows that, though. And tell him I'm coming over to see him in a day or so. Just tell him Mr. Narr is coming to see him."

"Yes, sir," murmured Teddy. "Is that all?"

"Well, if you think you can remember it, I'll give you a bit more of a message," went on Mr. Narr. "Do you think you can?"

"I'll remember it all right," Teddy said, his heart beating faster than ever.

"I'll help him," offered Janet. And she,

too, felt that something was going to happen.

"Well, just tell Mr. Keller the reason I am coming to see him," went on Mr. Narr, "is that I want to get his bunch of keys. I've left mine at my town house, and I want to get in my safe deposit box in New York City, without going all the way back to where I live to get my keys. I don't want to have them mailed, for they might be lost. It's a bad thing to lose keys—especially safe deposit box keys. Just tell Mr. Keller that I'll be over to the mainland in a day or so, to get his bunch of keys. They're really my keys, but he keeps them for me. Do you think you can remember that message, Curlytops?"

"Yes—yes, sir," almost whispered Teddy.

The worst had happened!

Mr. Keller's sad loss was going to be found out, and by the very man he didn't want to know.

What could be done?

CHAPTER XIX

MR. NARR ARRIVES

Mr. Narr, not knowing anything of the feelings he was causing in the fluttering hearts of Janet and Ted, began to plan for getting the Curlytops home to the main shore and to Sunset Beach.

"Now don't forget my message to Mr. Keller about my keys, will you?" asked the rich man.

"We'll remember," said Ted, glancing at his sister. That was the trouble—they only wished they could forget. But they could not.

"Now I think the best way to get you two shipwrecked sailors home is to send you in my motor boat," went on Mr. Narr. The eyes of Ted and Janet sparkled with joy at this, and they almost forgot the trouble coming to poor Mr. Keller. They loved to ride in a motor boat. "Yes," went on Mr. Narr,

"the motor boat will be best. Then it can tow your rowboat."

"I'll be glad of that, thank you," remarked Ted, "'cause we've got to put that boat back where we got it or Jimmie'll be mad at us. We lost his oars, though," and Teddy sighed with regret.

"Don't let that worry you," advised Mr. Narr. "There are a lot of odd and extra oars in my boathouse. I'll have Peter pick you out a pair and you can give them to Jimmie—whoever he is."

"Jimmie's a boy I play with," Teddy informed the rich man.

"Oh, I see. Well, you can give him back his oars as well as the boat. Come now, Peter, have the *Spray* brought around to the dock to take these shipwrecked ones home."

"Yes, sah!" answered the colored man, with a kind smile at the Curlytops.

"Don't you want the crabs we caught?" asked Janet. "We'd be glad to have you take them."

"Yes!" exclaimed her brother. "We can catch more for my father."

"Thank you, no, I don't want the crabs," answered the rich man. "Look out for the

basket of crabs, Peter," he added. "Don't let any of them get away."

"Oh, no, sah; I'll be mighty keerful ob dem!" declared the colored man. "I was bit by a crab wunst, an' I don't wants to be bit agin! I'll see to dem crabs all right."

"I guess they're asleep now," said Janet. "So they won't bother you very much."

"No, li'l gal, I hopes dey don't," murmured Peter, as he shuffled off to get the motor boat *Spray*.

Repeating again his message for the Curlytops to deliver to Mr. Keller about the lost keys, Mr. Narr walked with the children down to the dock. Soon there arrived at the little pier the puffing *Spray* towing the rowboat, in which a pair of oars had been put.

"I'm glad of that," said Teddy to his sister, when he saw the wooden blades. "Now Jimmie won't be mad."

"Yes, it's good we got another pair," Janet agreed.

Mr. Narr helped the children into the boat which, it appeared, Peter was to guide over to the mainland and down to Sunset Beach, which could be dimly seen down the bay.

"Thank you for taking care of us," said

Janet to the rich man, as the boat was about to start.

"We're much obliged," added Teddy.

"Oh, you're welcome, I'm sure," laughed Mr. Narr, in a good-natured voice. "I was glad to have you call. Don't lose any of those crabs overboard, Peter!" he called to the colored man, who was doing something to the motor of the boat.

"No, sah! I won't, sah!"

"They're asleep all right," Janet said, standing up in the motor boat so she could look into the rowboat which was being towed astern. There was no movement of the crabs beneath their covering of green seaweed in the peach basket.

"And don't forget to tell Mr. Keller I am coming for my keys!" called Mr. Narr, as the *Spray* swung out from the dock.

"We won't forget!" chorused Teddy and Janet.

And then, when the boat was out from shore and when Ted saw that Peter was up in the bow, handling the steering wheel, the little Curlytop boy said to his sister in a low voice:

"Do you think we'd better tell him?"

"Tell who?" Janet wanted to know.

"Tell Mr. Keller about Mr. Narr coming for his keys."

"Course we'll have to tell him," insisted Janet. "Didn't we promise we would?"

"That's so," admitted Teddy. "Yes, we got to tell! But what will Mr. Keller do?" he went on, still whispering. Though there seemed little need of this, for Peter was up in front while the children sat on a cushioned seat in the stern of the *Spray,* and the colored man did not appear to be listening.

"I don't know what he can do," sighed Janet. "He hasn't got the keys to give Mr. Narr."

"I guess Mr. Narr'll be terrible mad," remarked Teddy.

"I guess he will," agreed Janet. "But when we get back we can help Mr. Keller look again for the keys and for Mrs. Keller's ring."

"Yes," whispered Teddy. "But I guess it won't do any good. We've looked all over in the sand and we can't find anything. And Mr. and Mrs. Keller've looked all over in the sand and they can't find anything."

"Yes," agreed his sister. "But maybe if we looked just a little bit more we might find the keys, anyhow. Course I'd like to

find Mrs. Keller's ring, but Mr. Narr doesn't want that. All he wants is to get Mr. Keller's keys for a little while."

"And if Mr. Keller has to tell that he lost 'em——"

Teddy did not finish the sentence, but his sister knew what he meant.

"It's too bad," sighed Janet.

Peter, having gotten the motor of the boat to running the way he wanted it to run, and seeing that the steering gear was all right, now turned back to look at the children.

"Does yo' all know where yo' wants to be landed?" he asked, waving his hand toward the distant shore which was now nearer.

"You could leave us in the little hole where Jimmie hides his boat," suggested Ted.

"But then we'll have to carry the basket of crabs all the way home," objected Janet. "And they'll be heavy."

"That's so," Ted admitted.

"Is dey a dock sommers neah yo' house?" asked Peter.

"Why, yes!" exclaimed Janet. "There's a dock right back of our house—you know the dock where Mr. Harris keeps his boat," she added to her brother. "He'd let us land

there, and we could easy carry the basket of crabs up the path to our house."

"That's so!" chimed in Ted. "And afterward I could row Jimmie's boat back to the hiding hole and leave it."

"Aw right, den!" chuckled Peter. "I'll make fo' de Harris dock. I knows where dat is aw right!"

He swung the *Spray* around, and soon she was headed in the right direction. A little later a landing was made at the Harris dock. The rowboat was cast off from the *Spray* and made fast to the dock for Ted to row around to the hiding place a little later. Then Ted and Janet got out, Peter set the basket of crabs on the dock and started back for the island.

"Good-bye, chilluns!" he called. "An' don't forgit Mr. Narr's message. He's a monstrous 'ticklar man, Mr. Narr is! He wants everyt'ing jesso, he suah do! Everyt'ing jesso!"

"What does he mean by *jesso*?" asked Janet of her brother, as the motor boat swung out into the bay.

"I think he means just so. You know—extra particular," explained the little Curlytop boy.

"Oh, I see," murmured Janet.

They found a stick which they thrust through the slits in the peach basket and thus carried the crabs up to their cottage.

"Why, Curlytops! where have you been?" exclaimed their mother, when she saw the two rather forlorn and bedraggled youngsters coming up the path.

"We been crabbing," answered Teddy.

"And we got a lot of 'em—big ones, with blue claws, and they're asleep now, for they're real quiet," added Janet.

"Yes, I know you've been crabbing," went on their mother. "But what kept you so long? I was getting worried about you."

"We were—now—sorter shipwrecked," explained Ted.

"And we landed on Mr. Narr's island and he's coming to get Mr. Keller's keys and he hasn't got them and what's he going to do?" gasped Janet, almost in one breath.

"My goodness! what's all this about?" cried Mrs. Martin, with a laugh. "Not quite so fast, if you please, Janet."

Thereupon, taking turns, the Curlytops explained all that had happened from the time they started after crabs until they

reached home. Mrs. Martin listened, and at the end of the little story she exclaimed:

"Dear me! This is too bad!"

"It will make trouble for Mr. Keller, won't it?" Janet wanted to know.

"I'm afraid it will—yes. He may lose his place with Mr. Narr, who is very quick-tempered and stern, I am told. Dear me! I don't know what to do."

"Couldn't we go hunt again for the lost keys?" asked Teddy.

"It's very kind of you to want to do that, my dear," his mother said. "But it's going to be dusk soon, and it would do little good to search now."

"Then we'll look to-morrow," said Janet.

"Yes, you may do that," agreed her mother. "Meanwhile I'll get Daddy to see Mr. Keller."

"And we must tell him what Mr. Narr said—about coming over after the keys," said Janet. "We promised we'd tell him."

"Yes, I'll see that he is told," promised her mother. "Poor Mr. Keller!" she murmured. "If he loses his place as Mr. Narr's secretary, it will be hard at his time of life. I wish we could do something. Well, we must have Norah boil the crabs, at any rate,"

she went on. "Daddy is so fond of crab salad."

The crabs, if they had been "sleeping," as Janet said, soon awakened when the green seaweed was taken off them, and they lashed about with their big, blue claws, seeking something to pinch. Failing to get hold of any fingers or toes of the Curlytops, the crabs pinched each other. But this did no harm, as each crab was encased in a hard shell.

However, Norah soon made the crabs into a salad, and the Curlytops looked at the empty shells, the hot water having turned them a beautiful red, like coral.

That evening Mr. Keller called at the Martin cottage, he and his wife coming over in answer to a telephone message from Mr. Martin. As the Curlytops had a part in the events of the day, they were allowed to remain up to deliver Mr. Narr's message in person. Trouble also wanted to stay up, but as he was just getting over a little spell of illness his mother packed him off to bed, hushing his cries by promising him another bear story.

Mr. and Mrs. Keller listened to the tale told by Teddy and Janet. The children de-

livered the message that had been given them by Mr. Narr about his keys.

"Did he seem angry?" asked the old secretary.

"No, he was laughing," answered Janet.

"And did he say he'd come to get my keys (which of course are his keys) to-morrow?" Mr. Keller wanted to know.

"He said," remarked Teddy, trying to think of the exact words used by Mr. Narr, "he said to tell you he'd be over in a day or so."

"Then he may come to-morrow!" exclaimed Mrs. Keller. "Oh, Harry, what are we going to do? I don't mind so much about my wedding ring! But what about Mr. Narr's keys?"

"We shall have to look again for them to-morrow," said the old gentleman, in a sad and weary voice. "We shall have to look again. But I have no hopes of finding them in the sand. Then I shall have to tell Mr. Keller all about the loss, and he will, very likely, discharge me."

"He'll be mean if he does!" burst out Teddy.

"No, little man, it will be only what he thinks is right," said Mr. Keller. "He will

tell me, which is the truth, that I should not have been so careless as to lose the keys. I should have been more careful. But that is my fault. Now the only thing I can do is to look again in the sand."

"We'll help you!" burst out Janet.

"Bless your dear little hearts!" murmured Mrs. Keller.

"And now, my dears," said Mrs. Martin, "you Curlytops had better go up to bed."

"And can we help look for the lost keys in the morning?" asked Teddy.

"Yes, my dears."

"And the lost ring, too?" asked Janet, with a look at Mrs. Keller.

"Yes. Now, go to bed."

"All right," said Janet. "Good-night, Mrs. Keller. Good-night, Mr. Keller," and the little girl shook hands with the two visitors. Then she kissed Mother and Daddy and left the room.

Ted then said good-night all around, and followed his sister.

Mr. and Mrs. Keller remained some little time at the Martin cottage, talking with the parents of the Curlytops. Ted and Janet were asleep when the visitors left.

Bright and early the next morning, the

Curlytops were awake and up. They hurried through their breakfast—that is, they hurried as much as their mother would let them—and then they hastened down to the beach, eager to take up the search again for the lost keys and the ring.

As they ran down to the beach, Ted and Janet holding hands, Ted held back for a moment.

"What's the matter?" asked his sister.

"Look," he replied in a low voice. "There comes Mr. Narr now, and I guess he's going up to our house."

He pointed to the figure of the rich old gentleman, walking along and swinging his gold-headed cane.

"Why's he going to our house, do you s'pose?" asked Janet.

"'Cause, I guess, maybe Peter, the colored man, brought him over in the motor boat and landed him at the Harris dock," explained Ted. "And Mr. Narr is going up to our house—we showed Peter where it was—don't you 'member?"

"Yes, we showed him," said Janet, nodding her head with such vigor that her curls fell over her forehead and she had to push them out of her eyes.

"And Mr. Narr's going up to our house to ask where Mr. Keller lives."

"Yes," assented Janet. "And when he finds out he'll go and ask Mr. Keller for the keys. And Mr. Keller won't have 'em and—and——"

She paused a moment. Then Ted started off on the run, dragging Janet along with him.

"Don't run so fast!" she protested. "Where you goin'?"

"We've got to find those keys for Mr. Keller before Mr. Narr knows they're lost!" exclaimed Ted. "Come on!"

CHAPTER XX

WHAT TROUBLE FOUND

Casting a backward glance over her shoulder as she ran along with her brother, Janet saw Mr. Narr making his way toward the Martin cottage. As yet the rich old gentleman had not seen the Curlytops.

"If we can only find the keys before he asks Mr. Keller about them, it will be all right," said Ted.

"Yes," agreed Janet. "But we've got to look fast and we've got to look terrible hard in the sand."

"We'll do it!" declared Teddy.

Down to the stretch of sand hurried the Curlytops. They knew where to find the place where the keys and wedding ring had been lost. Some of the stones and pieces of driftwood that Teddy had put in a circle to mark the spot were still in place. The post Mr. Keller set up was also there. The

sand was not near enough the water to make it a favorite playing ground for the children, and no waves had washed over it.

So, as it happened, the sand had not been much disturbed except by the digging and sifting that Mr. Keller had had done. There were holes and hills where the men had taken out the sand, to pass it through their sieves in the search for the lost articles.

"You begin on that side, and I'll start over here," suggested Ted to his sister, when they reached the place. "Look over every bit of sand."

"I will," she answered. "But there's an awful lot of sand to look over, Teddy."

"I know there is, Jan."

"If we had somebody to help us," went on the little Curlytop girl. "Couldn't you get Jimmie?"

"I might get him," Ted admitted. "But it would take half an hour, and I'd have to leave you alone and maybe Mr. Narr might come along and—and——"

"Oh, well, never mind—we'll hunt by ourselves," Janet decided.

So the children began delving in the sand again, looking for the lost wedding ring and the keys, as they had looked many times

before. Handful after handful of the shifting, white grains they picked up. They looked carefully in each handful before casting it aside. But nothing rewarded them.

"The keys'll be easier to find than the ring," said Ted, pausing a moment to straighten his little, aching back.

"Yes. But I'd like to find the ring too—Mrs. Keller would be so glad," murmured Janet.

"Maybe we can find 'em both," said Ted, hopefully.

However, as five—ten—fifteen minutes passed, and they found nothing, the Curlytops began to be discouraged.

There was still a great deal of sand to look over, even within the circle of stones and sticks. Janet stood up a moment to get the kinks out of her legs and, as she did so, a shadow fell across the sand in front of her and her brother.

"Oh!" murmured Janet, for she thought it might be Mr. Narr coming with his gold-headed cane—Mr. Narr who would be so angry because Mr. Keller had lost his keys. "Oh!" said Janet again, and then she looked up.

Her heart did not beat so fast when she

saw only her mother and Trouble. Teddy, too, who had glanced up at the movement of the shadow and who had heard his sister's murmured cry, looked pleased when he saw who it was.

"Well, I wondered what had become of you two," said Mrs. Martin, who had brought William out to get the sunshine and fresh air, for he now was over the worst of his illness.

"We came down to look for Mr. Keller's keys and Mrs. Keller's ring," explained Teddy.

"I see you have."

"And Mr. Narr—we saw him going up to our house," added Janet.

"Yes, he's up there now, talking to your father," Mrs. Martin said.

"Does he know about the lost keys yet?" Ted wanted to know.

"No, not yet. Of course he will have to be told," said Mrs. Martin. "But your father thought Mr. Keller had better tell Mr. Narr himself. So your father has telephoned to Mr. Keller to come over to our cottage. Mr. Keller is on his way now, I think, to meet his employer."

"And will he get discharged, Mother?" asked Janet.

"I don't know, my dear. But I came to tell you that I think it isn't of any use to look longer for the lost things."

"Why not?" Ted asked, digging feverishly in the sand.

"Because I don't believe you'll find them. They must either have been washed out to sea, or some one has picked them up and taken them away. Yes, William," she said to the little fellow, "you may play in the sand. But don't go far away."

She put him down on the beach, and Trouble began walking about, stopping now and then to dig with a stick.

"Well, I don't guess we're going to find them," said Teddy, with a sigh. "We've looked hard, haven't we, Jan?"

"Terrible hard," answered the little girl, with a sigh even more sorrowful than the one her brother emitted.

"It can't be helped," said Mrs. Martin. "Mr. Narr will soon know the truth—that Mr. Keller has lost his keys. Perhaps, after all, Mr. Narr will be kind and overlook the loss."

"He was kind to us," said Teddy. "He gave us something to eat."

"Yes; perhaps he isn't as cross as he looks," Mrs. Martin said, with a smile. "Oh, Trouble! what have you there?" she suddenly cried, for she saw that the little fellow had picked up something from the sand and was bringing it to her. "What have you found?" she asked.

"Clam shell," answered the little boy. "It's a clam shell an' it's got suffin inside. Maybe it's a little nellifunt inside," he added, as he shook the shell and held it up to his ear.

"It isn't a clam shell—it's a whole clam!" exclaimed Ted. "A whopping big one, too. Let me see it, Trouble."

"No! No!" murmured the little fellow, holding the object behind him. "Dis my nellifunt clam!"

"Give it to Mother, dear," said Mrs. Martin, gently.

Trouble held it out to her.

"It is a big double clam shell," she said, taking it in her hands. "The clam has been taken out, though," she went on. "But there *is* something inside," and she shook it. The Curlytops could hear a rattling noise.

"Oh, Mother! what you s'pose it is?" cried Janet, her eyes shining eagerly.

"Perhaps the poor, old clam that used to live in the shell has dried up and gone to sleep," suggested Mrs. Martin. "Or it may be some pebbles or sand or dried seaweed inside. I'll open it and look."

The two curved halves of the clam shell were still joined together at the hinged back, but, unlike most shells of this kind, when the clam has been taken out, this one was closed, and not gaping wide open.

"Here's a stick to pry it open with," offered Teddy, handing his mother a stick with which he had been digging in the sand.

Using this, Mrs. Martin opened the shell. Crowding about her and looking over her shoulders, the Curlytops saw within the shell something that made their eyes open wide with wonder.

"Oh!" cried Janet. "There's Mrs. Keller's gold wedding ring!"

"And Mr. Keller's bunch of keys!" added Ted.

"I believe that's just what Trouble found!" exclaimed Mrs. Martin, shaking the sand out of the shell and revealing more

clearly a bunch of jingling keys and a gold ring. The ring was bright, but the keys were red with rust.

"How did they get there?" asked Teddy.

"It would be hard to say," answered his mother. "They may have been brushed into the open shell when the search was going on. Or some children playing here, and not knowing the keys and ring were lost, may have found them and put them in the shell for fun. Then they buried the shell, keys and ring and Trouble just found them. At any rate, they must have been here for some time. But they surely are the things Mr. and Mrs. Keller lost. Oh, I'm very glad, for the dear old couple worried so about them."

"Let's take them over now!" suggested Janet.

"Yes, right away!" added her brother.

"I want my shell!" demanded Trouble. "I want my little nellifunt clam shell."

"You shall have it, dearie!" laughed Janet, giving him a hug. "You don't know what you found! You're a lucky little boy, Trouble."

"Um!" was all he answered.

Carrying the keys and ring carefully, Mrs.

Martin and the three children started back toward the cottage. They saw Mr. and Mrs. Keller just going in.

"Oh, I must hurry and give Mr. Keller his keys before Mr. Narr asks for them," said Mrs. Martin. "Here, Ted, you run on ahead with them. Tell Mr. Keller, as quietly as you can, how we found them. Of course, later on, he will explain to Mr. Narr how they were lost. But I don't want Mr. Narr to be cross and scold, as he is sure to do when he learns that the keys were lost."

Taking the rusty bunch, Teddy started off, but he had not gone more than a few steps before they all saw Mr. Martin and Mr. Narr coming out of the cottage to meet the elderly couple.

"Oh, now it is too late!" murmured Mrs. Martin, sadly. "You can't give the keys to Mr. Keller without Mr. Narr seeing it—and then he will guess what has happened!"

Hardly knowing what to do, Mrs. Martin and the children, with Ted still carrying the keys, walked on toward Mr. Narr and Mr. Martin, who were about to meet Mr. and Mrs. Keller.

"Ah, here are my little shipwrecked friends!" exclaimed Mr. Narr, playfully

shaking his gold-headed cane at Ted and Janet. "Have you been catching any more crabs?" he asked.

"No—no, sir!" faltered Ted, wondering what to do with the keys.

"Hello, Mr. Keller! How are you?" went on Mr. Narr, taking off his hat to Mrs. Keller. "I came over to find out where you lived, he went on. "I have been asking the direction from Mr. Martin—the father of the shipwrecked children," and he laughed. "I wanted to see you about the bank keys," he went on.

"Yes—yes, sir," faltered Mr. Keller. Now was the critical moment, thought the old gentleman. "I shall have to tell him they are lost and he will discharge me."

Ted was wishing there was some way of slipping the keys into Mr. Keller's pocket, but it could not be done without Mr. Narr seeing it.

"Yes, about your bunch of my keys," went on the rich man, with a chuckle. "I just came to tell you that you needn't bother about letting me take your bunch. I've found my own keys, so I won't need yours!"

Mr. Keller did not seem to know what to say.

"You—you won't need my keys?" he stammered. "You—you——"

"No, I have my own," and Mr. Narr drew a jingling bunch from his pocket. "I thought I had left them at my town house, but I found them in the island cottage. So I came over to tell you I wouldn't need yours. I sent word by the shipwrecked children, you know, for you to have your bunch ready for me."

"Yes," murmured Mr. Keller, "I know, and——"

Just then Teddy dropped the bunch of keys which fell with a jingle on the sand.

"Hello!" exclaimed Mr. Narr, looking at them sharply. "They look just like my keys."

"I—I think they're my keys—the bunch I lost!" said Mr. Keller. "I was going to tell you, Mr. Narr, that I had lost your keys. My wife lost her wedding ring at the same time, but how my keys came here I don't know! Oh, I don't know—I——"

He seemed much confused.

"Trouble found them!" cried Janet, with a laugh.

"In a clam shell!" added Teddy.

"And here is your wedding ring! Oh,

I am so glad I can give it back to you!" said Mrs. Martin to Mrs. Keller, handing her the band of gold. "Now all the lost is found!"

"Well! well!" laughed Mr. Narr. "And did you worry, Mr. Keller, because you had lost my keys?"

"Yes, Mr. Narr, I worried a lot," answered the old man. "I feared you would discharge me and——".

"Nonsense! Nonsense!" laughed the rich old man. "I'm not such a bear as that! Of course if the keys had been lost it might have made a little trouble. But I could easily get others. I'm sorry you had all this worry. But now it is all over!"

"Yes," murmured Mrs. Keller, as she slipped her wedding ring back on her finger, "our worries are all over now—thanks to the Curlytops!"

"And thanks to Trouble!" added her husband, with a laugh. "We mustn't forget Trouble and his clam shell."

"It didn't have no little nellifunt in, though!" complained William. "And I want a little nellifunt! Or else maybe I want a story about a bear."

"Come here, little man, and I'll tell you a story about a bear!" said Mr. Narr, hold-

ing out his hands. "I haven't told a bear story to a little chap like you for many a year."

"Does you know a story about a bad bear?" demanded Trouble.

"Yes, indeed I do!"

" 'Bout a nawful bad bear—a *nawful* bad bear? A terrible bad bear?" and Trouble opened his eyes wide.

"Yes, about the worst bear in the world."

"Go on, nen. Tell it, please," begged the little boy, nestling into the rich man's arms.

And then every one was happy—but happiest of all were the Curlytops.

THE END

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By HOWARD R. GARIS

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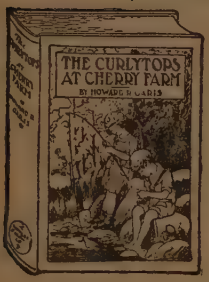

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